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The Nemesis of Democracy

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WHEN universal suffrage came in, democracy went out as a practicable proposition. This formed no part of the original program of the makers of the Constitution; if they had foreseen it they would have framed a very different sort of document. It cannot be too often reasserted that with hardly an exception they feared "the people" as a source of original action, did all they could to forestall any such activity on their part, and only under protest allowed them a small share in such action in the politic hope that this would help the necessary ratification. As a matter of fact, it was never a "people's Constitution", as has been so frequently claimed in Fourth of July celebrations, at Presidential elections, and on other similar occasions. They, the people, were never very much interested, either in the project itself or in the ratification of a form of national government. They did not particularly want anything of the sort and they did not like what came out of Philadelphia, but this distaste was not strong enough to overcome their natural

lethargy, so only about five percent of the white male population voted as to whether the Constitution should be accepted or rejected. As it was, it only got by by the skin of its teeth and by some very clever management on the part of its proponents. The whole thing, in conception, formulation, and realization, was the work of a small group of enthusiastic young men of property and position, with wiser heads on their shoulders than their years would argue as rationally possible, though they were not wise enough to foresee the unimaginable — but inevitable.

They did expect that the new Republic would vastly expand and its population increase immeasurably; also that in the very process of nature, conditions would change. They could not, however, foresee the revolution that coal, iron, steam, and electricity, used under a system of free competition, would effect when implemented by that consummate invention of the lawyers and politicians, the limited liability or joint-stock company, nor that racial solidarity would ultimately be dislodged through the immigration of millions of alien stocks, nor that two factors then unknown, aggressive humanitarianism and medical science, would ultimately insure the "survival of the unfittest", and that the very "democratic" theory they so gravely feared and against which they so earnestly strove would one day negate all their pious efforts and place all power in the hands of a propertyless, unfree proletariat, organized, directed, and exploited by a caste of professional politicians deriving directly from this same class of mass men.

It is possible that under the racial, social, economic, and industrial conditions that existed in the last years

of the eighteenth century a representative democracy could have functioned acceptably within the safeguards erected by the Constitution of 1787. One generation later a process began that developed by geometrical progression, and that made this impossible. Had the old selective social system, with its materialization in a frame of government based on qualitative rather than quantitative standards of value, been able to maintain itself, the same might have been true. It is conceivable that an entirely new world, which had come into being by 1865, might have been administered on the lines of the old, at least so far as its major principles are concerned. Had the new-born industrial, commercial, financial organism been directed, curbed, and controlled by able, scrupulous, high-minded, and honorable men of "light and leading" instead of by emancipated proletarians and self-seeking politicians, the incalculable potential inherent in the new forces might have been directed for good.

This was not to be, and the nemesis of order and value lay in universal manhood suffrage.

It all works out like a proposition in Euclid, if you accept the premise that the majority of human beings in Europe and the Americas (some sociologists and biologists rate the proportion as high as sixty or seventy percent) are possessed of the mentality of a fourteen-year-old child. There are optimistic humanitarians who are disposed to question this, but it seems to me that the fact is pretty well proved by the sort of leadership that is accepted, the motives displayed in social and political action, and the conduct revealed under the influence of mob psychology. Another irrefutable evidence is the sort of thing provided for

popular consumption by the newspapers, pulp magazines, radio, and Hollywood. Sometimes, as in this post-War period, with popular action as displayed in French politics, in the Spanish Revolution, and in our own social turmoil, combined with the recent Presidential campaign, the depressed observer is inclined to accept the higher percentage of mental incapacity noted above, or even to posit a theory of subnormality.

Now, with this basis to work on, we find a combination of depressive influences that play incessantly on the unfortunate class of tabloid personalities, not only working against their advancement in character and intelligence, but actually degrading them to lower depths. It would be superfluous to name these again, but to those already listed, may be added the self-made propagandists of social, political, and religious fantasies, the current type of secular "modern" education, and the run of professional politicians. There is a widespread idea that formal school education will, or ought to, correct these deleterious influences, but apart from the well-established axiom relating to the manufacture of silk purses, we confront the fact that, even were this educative system perfectly adapted to its necessary and beneficent purpose, it functions only some six hours a day for about half the days in the year, while the specified depressive agencies work all the time, and overtime. In all this there is no implied condemnation of or scorn for the mass man, but rather a sympathetic pity for him in the way he has been betrayed, and this betrayal extends not only to the concrete forces that have been brought to bear on his defenselessness, but also to those who have,

through the operation of the misinterpreted doctrine of human equality, placed on him a burden of civic responsibility he is, by nature, unfitted to bear.

In contemplating some new sort of socio-political organism, there is one prerequisite without which no scheme will function any better than the one we have now. If we are to retain any sort of free, representative government that guarantees liberty and justice with decency and effectiveness in operation, universal suffrage will have to be abandoned in favor of some restricted, selective scheme such as was in force and held to be a desideratum by the statesmen of 1787. The totalitarian state, as it operates at present under some of the current dictatorships, is repugnant to the American sense of liberty and justice and fair play, and some other way must be found for control of the electoral franchise than complete abolition.

Just what the answer is is none too easy to say. Of course, as has been said before, the first necessity is to get rid of the Reconstruction dogma that this is a natural right appertaining to all men (and women) by virtue of their humanity. It should be considered a solemn duty and a high privilege granted for cause; something like a college degree, though not given for the same reasons. This is a counsel of perfection and probably as impossible of achievement as it would be "politically inexpedient". There are two things, however, that might, perhaps, be done, which would help not only action, but in establishing a right judgement as to the nature of the franchise itself. These are: first, the withdrawal of the voting privilege from those convicted of any crime or misdemeanor involving "moral turpitude"; second, the ownership of prop-

erty, real or functional, as a prerequisite to the exercise of the electoral franchise.

Under the first heading, *permanent* disfranchisement would only follow conviction for the most serious offenses where a fundamental moral obliquity was clearly evident. Below this grade of crimes which would, of course, include bribery, corruption, malfeasance in office, and offenses against the ballot, would come those of lesser moment (though also socially pernicious) where deprivation would run from a year upwards. To specify two or three of varying degrees, there would be adulteration of foods, libel, cruelty to man or beast, swindling of any sort, fraud, malicious mischief, *et cetera*. So to penalize anti-social action might prove to be the most effective protection of society.

Under the second heading, the vote would follow property. The statement in this form requires definition. "Property" does not mean money, goods, securities, shares in industrial or commercial ventures. There is no actual *reality* in any of these things; they are tokens of potential value, mostly certificates of indebtedness. Their *real* value is wholly dependent on confidence on the part of the members of the community, individually or in the group, and as Mr. Coyle, the wise and clever author of *Brass Tacks*, has said, "'confidence' [is] forgetfulness of what happened to us last time". "Property" is, as has already been said, the ownership in fee simple of land, tools of trade, or an individually owned business or individually practised profession, sufficient to guarantee decent living conditions for a household. A wage or salary is not property and the recipient of such is,

strictly speaking, a proletarian. A proletarian is not a free man and only free men can safely participate in government.

This is, of course, an extreme statement of the case, and must be safeguarded. There are salaried men, particularly in the upper brackets, who are free, if they wish to be; there are *rentiers* of whom the same may be said. Where, however, the holding of a place and the collection of a wage are dependent on doing a job in accordance with orders from "higher up", under penalty of being fired and joining the ranks of the unemployed or going on the dole, then the man so placed is not a free man. This holds good from the editor of a big newspaper, a college professor, or a Protestant parson to a bank clerk, a brick mason, or a mill hand. If any of these owns a house and a parcel of land sufficient to provide, at need, for the maintenance of a family, or has on the side a business, craft, or trade that would meet the same ends if his stipend or wages stopped, then he also is potentially free. So may be those who live on the interest of invested capital, though their position is more precarious, and they may suddenly find, as did so many of their kind four years ago, that they have become proletarians overnight.

A century and a half ago the wisest minds, *e.g.*, the makers of the Constitution, held that only the holder of property, or the payer of taxes to a certain amount, should have the right to vote. To establish such a system today would be another counsel of perfection and out of touch with reality. As Sir Thomas Browne says, "The long habit of living indisposeth us for dying", and so the long habit of voting indisposeth us

for disfranchisement, whether for ourselves or another. As a general law it could hardly be imposed on the electorate, nor, it must be confessed, would such a course be justifiable. Voting for candidates for political office is about the only action in liberty left to the proletarian. Of course, voting means little or nothing under circumstances as they are, and is not much more than a gesture in honor to a lost liberty, but even as such it is of value and must be preserved against a better time when it would mean something more than making an X after the names of hand-picked candidates handed out by one or another partisan junta with instructions to sign on the dotted line — Democratic, Republican, or something else, as the case may be.

The question is then: is there another way of obtaining substantially the same ends that Jefferson envisaged when he urged that the vote should follow property, but that this should be spread as widely as possible? After all, in 1787 at least eighty-five percent of the American citizenry were property holders in the sense in which the term is now used, while today it is probable that not more than thirty-five percent could qualify. This, obviously, makes a quite new situation, and therefore demands a new solution.

A process of purification and measurable restriction is possible. One measure, temporary disfranchisement for anti-social actions, has already been referred to. Naturalization laws could be more rigidly enforced, the period of residence prior to citizenship extended, and perhaps a term of probation instituted with permanent refusal of the voting privilege if the probationer was convicted of any offense during that pe-

riod. Of course there should be a national law, binding on all the states, prohibiting the electoral franchise to anyone who could not speak, read, and understand the English language. Perhaps the solution lies in what is coming to be known as "functional representation". This is the plan that is tentatively being tried in Italy. The party system would be abolished and with it, presumably, the politicians. The former has already become meaningless, as is witnessed by the Presidential campaign of 1936; the latter have long since become a public nuisance. As George Bernard Shaw has said, "All politicians are amateurs in government, though when it comes to graft they are professional enough." In Italy and several other European states that had reached the end of the rope through a partisanship that had rotted into ten or fifteen quarreling blocs, each engineered by a political padrone or brigand chief, a sudden cry went up: "A plague on both — or all — your houses!"

Compulsory association of all citizens in professional, agrarian, commercial, and other groups made up of those of common interests, some twenty-two in all, is being tried as a basis for legislative representation. The compulsory element is destructive of individual liberty and is neither desirable nor acceptable, but voluntary associations might work. In this case all educators, mine-workers, bankers, chauffeurs, architects, *et cetera* would come together in their own local or state units and choose each its own representative to municipal, state, and national governments.

These same functional groups — guilds, syndicates, or what not, the name does not so much matter — might serve also in the choosing of a Governor or

President, so getting back to the idea of the Framers without recourse to the plan of an Electoral College in which they took such pride but which, for once, proved to be quite abortive. One of the things to which they were opposed with almost complete unanimity was the choice of a Chief of State by popular vote, for they had no confidence whatever in the judgement of the mass man. They slipped up badly in their device for avoiding this unhappy contingency, but experience has proved the validity of their fear and their contention.

With functional representation, or the alternative of "hundreds", as described below, these local representatives or "electors" would choose their own delegates to State conventions, and these in turn would send theirs to a national convention where a few hundred hand-picked men, representing all geographical areas and functional interests, would, in place of twenty or thirty thousand partisan zealots and camp-followers, incited by deafening music and inaudible oratory to ratify nominations already determined on in the proverbial "hotel back-room", choose a President from some already existing panel of potential candidates. This might be the Governors for the time being of the several States, or the members of the Senate, though in either case the quality of the respective personnels would have to be pretty drastically reformed above their present estate and made, again, more consonant with the lofty, but now lost, ideals of the members of the Constitutional Convention.

It must be pretty evident by this time that the worst possible way to choose a President is the one now in operation, just as it must be equally evident that the

worst man from the entire citizenry to serve as President is a politician — and as now a President so chosen is, of course, the supreme politician and the head of a party. If proof is needed to demonstrate this point, almost anyone who is *not* a politician can marshal the phalanx of irrefutable arguments. The subject goes, however, beyond the purview of this essay.

A possible variant of the plan of functional representation outlined above would be the formation of the electorate into "hundreds"; that is to say: any one hundred citizens with similar interests would voluntarily associate themselves in local groups, each group choosing a representative who would meet with the delegates of other groups and would exercise all electoral functions. For example, in a community containing 100,000 registered voters, there would be 1000 electors presumably representing all the varied interests of the body of citizens, and they would take the place of the 100,000 who now are entitled to cast their votes for all elective offices. In communities of 1000 voters or less, local affairs would be managed by the entire electorate in "town meeting", but delegates would be chosen by each hundred citizens to meet with the others in dealing with state and national affairs. In the case of great cities, the electors would meet in units of five hundred. These electors would be chosen for one year, but if they proved unsatisfactory to their constituents, these could remove them at any time, substituting others. All voting power in the states and the nation would be in these "electors" and they might very well coagulate into national guilds or syndicates similar to those now in process of evolution in Europe. Each hundred electors in any state

would select its own representative to deal with local affairs, and so on upward until a final group would choose the members of the lower house of the national legislature.

There would be certain advantages in this plan. It would pretty well eliminate the class of professional politicians and would probably effect a condition of functional representation, every one of the major interests in the nation being represented in the legislative body, whether this were state or national. Farmers, merchants, mechanics, financiers, miners, professional men, clergy, clerks, mill hands, teachers, all would have a spokesman to guard their own interests and express their views in all matters of government. It would form a true cross-section of the American people instead of the political interests of party managers. Not only would the electors function on occasion at elections, they would also exist as a sort of body of guardians of society and leaders of the community. The office of elector would so become (in theory, at least) the most honorable position a citizen could hold.

As things are now, the electorate as a whole is not interested in elections or in political questions generally. Except on special occasions, only about half the registered voters go to the polls, and these who do are predominantly the active members of the various parties regimented by the partisan bosses. Even to get out fifty percent of the vote these managers have to resort to all sorts of ballyhoo, whipping up the indifferent, threatening the recalcitrant, bribing the needy or the covetous. It would seem to be a fact that the majority of citizens are interested in other matters.

They know perfectly well that they do not understand the merits or demerits of most of the political measures put before them, or the character and capacity of the many candidates. Voting on state referenda is generally perfunctory and unintelligent, and if forty percent vote at all, it is a notable occurrence.

The point is that the majority of people do not know what they want, either in respect to measures or men. Those that vote at all rely on the arrogant and plausible politicians to tell them and on their nervous and emotional reactions to ballyhoo to stimulate them to register and go to the polls. Those that stay away — and some also that cast their ballots — know perfectly well that the political game is just another racket: that platforms, promises, and speeches mean just nothing at all, and that whether they vote or not, government, municipal, state, and national, will be run as the party managers and other higher-ups — political, financial, industrial, or labor — may of their own motion decide.

We are not a politically minded people like the French or the Irish, and except under unwholesome and even sinister stimulation, such as that of a Presidential election, we do not want to be bothered. If legislative and other political representation were established on a functional basis, it might well be otherwise and, following the lead of some of the Continental states, it might be well to make the experiment. Certainly the result could not be more depressing and discouraging than what has followed partisan government on a basis of universal suffrage.

Some Don'ts For Literary Regionalists

ROBERT PENN WARREN

AMERICANS are sometimes accused of having a get-rich-quick psychology; and accused with some justice. It has not been confined to the purely economic sphere of our activities, where it no doubt contributes substantially to our booms and depressions. It has been carried over into matters such as religion, and year after year we have had new sects and cults, each claiming to have a brand-new technique for getting results from God. It has been carried over into politics, where it makes possible the cure-all, the panacea, the short cut — prohibition, for instance, or the Townsend Plan. And in intellectual and artistic matters it produces "Culture" with a capital C, the five-foot shelf, which might be called a sort of educational Townsend Plan, or William Lyon Phelps, who might be called the Father Coughlin of literature. And this attitude, this get-rich-quick psychology, has contributed heavily to the current vogue of regionalism.

This regionalism is not merely a literary invention. It is a present manifestation of a force that has expressed itself in many ways in the past. In relation to our national concept it may be termed a centrifugal force. It was a force with which the founding fathers of the Republic had some difficulty in dealing, and it has emerged again and again in practical affairs, in the Hartford Convention, for instance, or more dramatically at Gettysburg. A fundamental element in this

force was the deeply ingrained instinct of the human creature to resent the attempt on the part of someone who lived a good many miles away and whose name, even, was unknown to take the gold out of his teeth. This force used to be called sectionalism. It expressed itself in the doctrine of states' rights, and, presumably, was embodied in the Constitution of the United States, where it died gradually of asphyxiation. But the decline of the force of the centrifugal principle did not bring perpetual prosperity, and with the collapse of 1929 the sentiment became almost general that, economically at least, the victory over the centrifugal principle had been somewhat Pyrrhic; and so the new regionalism, in that aspect, is apparently a polite attempt on the part of benevolent social philosophers to put back in the teeth of people who didn't happen to live where high tariff was an unmixed blessing some of the gold that was once complacently extracted. Regionalism is a more polite expression than sectionalism of the centrifugal principle, for it doesn't carry the threat of direct political, or other, action. Regionalism is a somewhat disinfected version of the centrifugal principle, which, when it manifested itself as unvarnished sectionalism, tended to be deficient in the Christian virtue of humility. Regionalism, then, we may take in its more practical aspects as an attempt to balance our economy—perhaps, metaphorically speaking, as a belated recognition of the fairly obvious fact that a circle cannot have a center without having a circumference.

But the decline of the centrifugal principle economically and politically was not an isolated thing. It was accompanied by an increasing pressure to stereo-

type American life, to throttle whatever diverged from the standard in favor of some local or regional sentiment. Official manifestations of regional or local pride, booster clubs and Chambers of Commerce, in fulfilling their function of advertising local benefits, merely advertised a belief that their special community was more like the ideal stereotype than the next stop down the line. That was, also, the period of hick-baiting. The hick was the appropriate butt, for he was apparently at that time the only surviving opponent of the stereotype, an inadequate opponent, with his blundering native conservatism and his inarticulate attachment to what he already knew.

But into what did the hick-baiters want to turn the hick? They never said. Into a drug-store cowboy, a bar-fly, a citizen whose view of human destiny was conditioned by the literature snuggling coyly and superfluously among the pants ads in *Esquire*, whose contact with real L-I-F-E was gained from the columns of O. O. McIntyre, and whose politics were defined by Arthur Brisbane? Probably not, but that was what the hick-baiter got in most cases, when he got any results whatsoever. Frequently the hick-baiter — Mencken, for instance — was impelled by the highest motives and hated the standard stereotype; but the irony of his labor was that he usually did nothing more than make the hick ready to accept the stereotype, because he was not offering the hick a substitute. He accomplished that instead of trying to define and encourage a spirit that might develop a broader cultural integrity in local terms.

But the hick-baiters are now middle-aged and tired. They are also finished. They are sufferers from tech-

nological unemployment, for their special talents are no longer required in our rapidly advancing civilization. The hick is not to be baited but pampered now, a process that may have its own dangers and may accomplish with a genial smile what ridicule and high-pressure salesmanship left undone. But, in any case, the hick-baiters are superseded. The issue is drawn along different lines.

The literature of the pre-depression period furnishes a considerable amount of documentation to the effect that writers found it impossible to write unless they could "get away". That was the period when first novels were frequently about the struggle of a young man or woman of genius — genius, for nothing less would do in most cases — to escape from the sordid surroundings of youth. Escape to what? That question was always unanswered. Or rather, it was answered only in a geographical sense. Escape to New York or Paris. But the question was never really answered, for the novel always stopped at that point. The trouble was not in New York or Paris; it was in the attitude of the writer who was escaping. He wanted to escape in search of a subject, a theme. Once in New York, let us say, he felt that he would discover not *how* to write but *what* to write; he went to learn *what* to think and not to say what he thought. Edgar Lee Masters once complained of this failure to observe the meaning of the local scene in a poem on Petit, the poet in *Spoon River Anthology*:

*Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
Tick, tick, tick like mites in a quarrel —
Faint iambs that the full breeze awakens —
But the pine tree makes a symphony thereof.*

*Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
Ballades by the score with the same old thought:
The snows and the roses of yesterday are vanished;
And what is love but a rose that fades?*

*Life all around me here in the village:
Tragedy, comedy, valor, and truth,
Courage, constancy, heroism, failure —
All in the loom, and oh, what patterns
Woodlands, meadows, streams, and rivers,
Blind to all of it all my life long.
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambs,
While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines?*

But most poets now know better than Petit did; and so do the novelists and the rest. For the country is now full of stanch regionalists.

The propagandizers for regionalism who talk about literature like to dwell on the "regionalism" of great writers of the past, and analyze complacently, with the terminology of "regional" criticism, the work of Hawthorne or Shakespeare. As a matter of fact; it scarcely requires a fanatical regionalist to approach Milton in the same terms, or even the paradoxical Henry James. We exclaim at what now seems to be the beautiful organic relation of the work of such writers to the social matrix of their time and place, and remark: "Ah, if we can only achieve a true regional spirit, then we'll have literature!" Perhaps we shall have a great literature. And the regional impulse, as I believe, may contribute something to a healthy literary development. But, on the other hand, it is not

an inescapable conclusion; perhaps our age is incurably eclectic in temper, diffuse, sceptical, faithless, and tentative.

Perhaps our current interest in regionalism is but one aspect, after all, of our incurable eclecticism, is but the nostalgia of the Alexandrian epoch. Perhaps we should ask ourselves: "Did Hawthorne have to reason or to will himself into his regionalism, into appropriate relation to his place and its past and present? Did he have to argue the point with himself and with other people, and did he attend conventions to discuss the matter?" Probably not; it was as natural as breathing, or at least that is the picture we now see. But in any case, can we be Hawthorne, or Melville? Even then forces were afoot that would destroy the vitality of the spirit from which Hawthorne wrote. There was, in fact, Emerson, who was a disintegrating influence — an eclectic, a philosopher who stood to the past of his little place and culture somewhat as the Neo-Platonists stood to a sterner and earlier Greece — Emerson with noble, vague, and intoxicating periods, laying the foundation that has served, how unwittingly, as the partial basis of our stereotype.

We may say that history does not repeat itself except in deceptive details, and that we can argue from it nothing of our future. We can say that we are not able to use our will and our reason to bring about a healthy and functional relation of the writer to his region and its society. But if we are to assume anything, we assume that we can use, however incompletely and defectively, our will and reason for realizing ends that seem desirable to us.

But it will not do to expect too much. We have the

get-rich-quick psychology about regionalism, as we have had it about certain matters in the past. There have been other booms. A dozen get-rich-quick formulae for literature have appeared — humanism, communism, imagism, objectivism, regionalism — all holding out the promise of the gold brick to the writer and the reader.

If regionalism is to mean anything at all, it must not be approached in this spirit. It must not be another fad, another facet of our eclecticism. And there are other things a literary regionalism must not be.

(1) Regionalism is not quaintness and local color and folklore, for those things when separated from a functional idea are merely a titillation of the reader's sentimentality or snobbishness. A novel loaded with folklore or local color, no matter how accurate, is not necessarily any better than a novel about adulterers who quote the poetry of Emily Dickinson in penthouses. The study of such material as folklore is valuable in precisely the same way as the study of various other things — and may be in certain hands, most hands, in fact, as irrelevant for the meaning of literature as the making of a card index of five-syllable words in the poetry of John Milton. The value of the study of folklore, etc., depends entirely on the context and the critical implications of the subject. Literary regionalism does not ascribe a privileged place to such investigation. It might be better for a literary regionalist who wanted to write a novel about Mississippi to read the stock-market reports and cotton quotations. Folklore and dialectal accuracy do not guarantee literary merit.

(2) Regionalism based on the literary exploitation

of a race or society that has no cultural continuity with our own tends to be false and precious. It is a touristic regionalism. The cult of Indian worship, as we often find it, is an example.

(3) Regionalism does not necessarily imply an emphasis on the primitive or underprivileged character. A novel about a brave cowpuncher or an honest share-cropper is not necessarily more honest, more regional, more convincing, more important, or more anything else, except faked, than a novel about J. P. Morgan or the late Fatty Arbuckle. There is a literature of false primitivism as well as the literature of superficial sophistication; and most of this literature has claimed the label of regionalism.

(4) Regionalism does not mean that a writer should relinquish any resource of speculation or expression that he has managed to achieve. Even simplicity does not mean simple-mindedness. There is no compulsion in regionalism that a modern poet should write fake folk ballads or that a novelist should cultivate illiteracy as a virtue. The poet might learn something from folk ballads, but he could never write them, in any case. A writer's worst dishonesty would be to deny, on the ground of theory, part of his own temper and own resource; to limit, arbitrarily, the sensibility he would bring to his material. Regionalism does not mean literature by exclusion rather than by inclusion.

(5) Regionalism does not mean that literature is tied to its region for appreciation. When it is so tied, it is so much the less literature. Literature that is only good on the local market probably depends for its interest on purely adventitious factors. Literature, as has often been said, is exportable, and does not, like

the wines of the old simile on this subject, lose its flavor in transit. Regionalism does not imply in any way a relaxing of critical standards.

(6) Even literary regionalism is more than a literary matter, and is not even primarily a literary matter. If it is treated as a purely literary matter it will promptly lose any meaning, for only in so far as literature springs from some reality in experience is it valuable to us. The regimen for the regionalist who wanted to be a writer would have its public as well as its private aspect.

The danger in regionalism lies in its last syllable, in the *ism*. As a fad it is meaningless. And those who profess a sympathy for the ideal might do well to realize that it scarcely promises quick returns, is not a cure-all, and provides for the writer no substitute for talent or intelligence.

Nicholas Berdyaev's Philosophy of History

ROSS J. S. HOFFMAN

AMONG the characteristics of the present age, which is marked by many revolts against the rationalistic and mechanistic intellectual tendencies of the last century, is the revival of a more organic concept of the historical process and a renewal of philosophical speculation upon the meaning — if there be any discoverable meaning — that is contained in or denoted by that process. There is a narrowing of the old positivist breach between history and philosophy. The philosophers are becoming more historical, and, what is even more evident, the historians are becoming more philosophical; and the fact has been manifest now since the turn of the present century.

The reason for this revived probing of history for revelation of its inner mysteries is undoubtedly the preoccupation of the mind with the grave crises through which our world has been passing since the latter years of the nineteenth century. The inadequacy of the old unphilosophical history, which reflected an order of relative peace and stability, was bound to be felt in the tempestuous period that was ushered in by imperialism, socialism, and pessimism, and carried through the great war, the Communist Revolution, and the last great *débâcle* of capitalism, to the present critical days, when all thoughtful persons are wondering how our civilization is to escape disaster. Without doubt we find ourselves today in

one of those cataclysmic periods which, ever since our civilization acquired an historical consciousness, have seen the mind turn to the philosophy of history.

The break-up of the Roman Empire, which provoked Saint Augustine to write his *Civitas Dei* — the first real effort to set forth the philosophy of history — was such a period. So was the age extending from the Enlightenment to the French Revolution and romantic reaction; during which time innumerable philosophies of history were composed, notably those of Condorcet, Herder, Schlegel, de Maistre, Bonald, Hegel, Saint-Simon, and Comte. And the present age has seen the spread of Marxian historical analysis, the work of Spengler and the wide sweep of his influence, the Italian historical idealism of Croce and Gentile, and the deeply Christian and metaphysical speculations on history of the Russian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev, whose latest published work* has occasioned this essay.

It is, in fact, an integral part of Berdyaev's thesis that only such an age as ours is able to grasp the "historical", to pierce through, as it were, to the metaphysical reality which, profoundly mysterious, is signified by the tragic destiny of man in the order of nature and time. He sets forth — and quite rightly, I believe — that there are three periods or stages in man's relation to and knowledge of the "historical". The first is a period of integral and organic experience in some settled historical order, fully matured and crystallized, as for example mediaeval Christendom. "This type of organic epoch does not favor either

* THE MEANING OF HISTORY by Nicholas Berdyaev (SCRIBNER'S. \$3.00).

historical awareness or the elaboration of a philosophy of history. . . . Here thought is static; and . . . the dynamism of the object of historical science is not yet clearly grasped by the human mind." Next comes a period of "fateful and menacing disruption" of that organic order. Its destiny is fulfilled and it breaks apart. In this age man is uprooted and alienated from tradition; he loses consciousness of the "historical", no longer feeling himself "directly and wholly a part of the historical object". This is an era of "enlightenment", such as the modern seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and during it historical science and criticism are born; but there is on the other hand a loss of communion with the "historical", that is, a loss of knowledge of the past from within, a dulling of that memory which is tradition. "Thirdly, there is the period that implies a return to the 'historical' . . . when the human spirit, having experienced the collapse of a given historical order and the moment of schism and disintegration, is able to appose and oppose these two moments—that of the direct participation in an historical order and that of the divorce from it—in order to arrive at a third state which induces . . . a particular aptitude for speculation and a corresponding aspiration towards the mysteries of the 'historical'. Such a state is especially favorable to the consideration of the problems of the philosophy of history." This third stage of consciousness appeared in the romantic and idealist reaction against Cartesian rationalism, and was manifested in the historical speculations of such men as Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, and Hegel. It continues and deepens today, the more so from the fact that, since the

romantic age, Marxian historical materialism has carried the revolt against the "historical" to the uttermost limits, accomplishing at last "the de-animation of history and the annihilation of its inner mysteries".

Berdyaev's thought thus stands in relation to Marxism very much as that of, say, Friedrich Schlegel, stands in relation to the atheistic and rationalist progressivism of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. His position is that of idealist and mystical reaction against a materialist nominalism and the non-recognition of mystery. For some years now his books have been appearing in English translation, and they have met with great acclaim and respect. Profound reflections on the Russian Revolution, Marxian philosophy, and the bourgeois mind have come from him; and the volume entitled *The End of Our Time* revealed him as a major prophet of our day. All this work is permeated by a philosophy of history that is now set forth explicitly in a separate study.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to present here any résumé or compressed statement of the form and meaning which Berdyaev discerns in the historical process. I shall, however, attempt a very brief characterization of his philosophy to prepare the way for certain critical observations I think it important to make.

Being Christian, Berdyaev's philosophy of history has inevitable affinity to Saint Augustine's grand historical drama of the City of God at war throughout time with the City of Satan. History originates in celestial cataclysm; its dialectic is the unceasing opposition of good and evil; its nature is that of the tragic destiny of the generations of men; its culmination will be in reintegration of the terrestrial with celestial

order. History is therefore that tragic destiny which humankind follows through time from the Fall to the consummation of the world, when there will be

No more barriers between our world beyond, as there were none in the depths of the past, before the dawn of life. . . . Our world aeon is coming to an end, the membrane separating it from other worlds will burst like that of a ripe fruit. This is the symbolical interpretation of the Apocalypse. The bond of time is broken, the closed cycle of terrestrial reality is invaded by the energies of a higher plane, the history of our world in time arrives together at its climax and its meaning. . . . History is not an endless development in time, nor is it subject to natural law, precisely because it is destiny (that is, determined to its end by the nature of its celestial origin). This is the ultimate finding of the metaphysics of history.

Now to the mind alienated from the Christian religious tradition, this conception of the meaning of history can seem, of course, no more than a work of mystical imagination. But it must be understood that such a mind is not competent to criticize the conception, but only to reject it completely. He who denies the piercing of the natural order by transcendent energies, and therefore denies also that there has been any revelation to man of transcendent truth, must, if he be logical, reject the very concept of the philosophy of history. For human intelligence is imprisoned in the order of nature and historic time, and from its very constitution cannot comprehend the process of which it is itself the subject — unless, of course, it is given adequate supernatural illumination. That is why there neither was nor could be any philosophy of history before the Judaic and Christian revelation.

The pagan and Oriental conception of the world process was one of repetitive cycles without beginning, end, or meaning; for to the pagan and Oriental mind the metaphysical could not manifest itself in the historical. No conception of history as having linear form and directive meaning could enter the human mind unless there were to occur a unique series of events pointing to an historical culmination; that is, prophecy and revelation were prerequisite to the conception of the philosophy of history. For the philosophy of history is of its nature prophetic and eschatological; it announces the meaning signified in the origin and destiny of the historical process. Hence modern philosophies of history, such as those of Condorcet, Saint-Simon and Marx — which posit the eschatological culmination of history in the perfection of the social order and a Utopian kingdom of man over the mechanics of nature — are not really independent and rival philosophies; rather are they secularist degradations of the Judaic-Christian eschatology, but for which they could not have occurred to the Western mind. For, I repeat, no pagan thinker conceived a linear historical progress, nor discovered any metaphysical reality in the cyclical repetition of human life-experience. Moreover, without the consciousness of freedom and the exaltation of man as king over nature, there could not have been any progress at all; the demons had to be expelled from nature before man could face it boldly and impose his mastery upon it. Our civilization was moving fatally toward death, and cringing before nature, when the religion of freedom and the kingdom of man entered it and made possible its miraculous recovery.

As Berdyaev says with perfect truth, it was the Christian revelation — that union of the metaphysical and historical, and of the divine with the natural, in the Incarnation and Redemption — which broke the closed cycle of terrestrial life, and “introduced the notion of dynamism and the liberating principle which released that tempestuous and rebellious history of the Western peoples, which has become pre-eminently history”.

Such are the reasons why one may rightly say that if the Judaic-Christian revelation is not truth but only human fancy, there can be no philosophy of history. For that philosophy is essentially religious; it is a deduction from theology and revelation, not truth discoverable in the empirical order. There are not, in fact, several philosophies of history as there are several religions and metaphysical systems; there is but one philosophy of history, as there is but one religion that implants historical consciousness in the mind of man. That philosophy is Christian, and all other so-called “philosophies of history” are but degraded and untenable derivatives from it.

That is not to say, however, that any one elaboration of this philosophy constitutes its true and correct statement. There is no orthodox version. No authority has ever accorded dogmatic force to any philosophy. The Church has never presumed to know the rationale of the historical process, but only to know certain transcendental truths which can indeed throw light upon the meaning of the historical process, but do not constitute the philosophy of history. This field of speculation, which must logically be closed to all who reject transcendency, is therefore

an area of legitimate conflict between Christian thinkers. Berdyaev has entered it with a treatise of very great importance, which cannot but provoke our admiration, at the same time that it invites strong controversial attack.

The first and chief objection which I believe may properly be made against this work touches its profoundly mystical character. Berdyaev probes for the origin of the "historical" in the celestial order, "in the depths of the Absolute, in the divine life itself"; but instead of hesitating before this frontier of mystery, he invades it for a theological adventure in pursuit of an answer to the question of how mobility could have arisen in the Absolute. Page after page he writes concerning this abstruse problem, opposing himself to rational theology, wading deep into the wilderness of German mysticism, and giving utterance to thought such as this:

Somewhere . . . there exists a state which may be called *Ungrund* or groundlessness to which neither human words nor the categories of good and evil nor those of being or non-being are applicable. *Ungrund* is deeper than anything else and is the primal source of what, according to Boehme and Schelling, constitutes the *Dark Nature of God*. In the nature of God, deeper than Him, lies a sort of primal dark abyss, and in its inmost depths occurs a theogonic process or that of divine genesis. This process is secondary when compared with that primal "groundlessness" and inexpressible abyss which is irrational and incommensurable with any of our categories. There is a primal source and fount of being from which an eternal torrent pours out and in which the divine light shines everlastingly, while the act of divine genesis is taking place. The acceptance of such a dark and irra-

tional premiss is one of the means toward the discovery and apprehension of the possible existence of movement in the inmost depths of the divine life. . . . Every glib rationalistic theory of the Divine denies this. All superficial doctrines, fearing to extend tragic movement to the divine life because they envisage the latter without inner contradiction or conflict, that is, reduced to an extreme form of logical and rational conception, also deny this. But it constitutes the great discovery of German metaphysics. . . . It determined to a large extent the future of German philosophy, whose fundamental discovery it indeed represents. It states that the primal foundations of being rest upon a certain irrational and willful principle, and that the whole significance and essence of the world process consist in the illumination of this dark irrational principle in cosmogony and theogony.

Now this is what Berdyaev sets forth as the hypothesis of his metaphysics of history, and I submit that it is a dangerous leap of the mind into the region of the unknowable. Dangerous, I say, not merely because it is the sort of theological mysticism that has issued again and again into irrational and heretical deviations from a sane Christian orthodoxy, but because no intellectual certainty can ever be attained by such flights of the mind across the borderland of reason.

Moreover, it may well be that there is in this a certain intellectual presumptuousness, even perhaps a kind of impiety, and that it is not good for man in his present state to seek to look too closely upon the face of God, lest what he sees there send him to despair. Certainly it is evident that there is a near connection between Berdyaev's mysticism and the deep pessimism which also permeates his historical speculation;

which is the second point on which I believe he is open to attack. His whole treatise is saturated with a pessimism concerning man in the terrestrial order. History reveals to him not a progress of man in this world, but a continuous succession of failures. Tragic defeat is the lot of every human generation.

Man's historical experience has been one of steady failure and there are no grounds for supposing that it will ever be anything else. Not one single project elaborated within the historical process has ever proved successful. None of the problems of any given historical epoch whatsoever has been solved, no aims attained, no hopes realized. . . . Examining specific periods of history and their respective problems, we feel them to be consumed with an inner disease and impotent to arrive at a solution. To consider only modern history, its profound failure is amazing.

Indeed, our Russian philosopher, who has elsewhere pronounced the doom of modern civilization, in this volume passes sentence of doom on all human effort to solve great terrestrial problems. I think one can detect here that age-old Oriental pessimism which conceives man's nature as wholly vitiated, not merely wounded by the Fall. And one can detect too what appears to be a deep inconsistency between this pessimism and the more completely orthodox elements of Berdyaev's philosophy of history. I mean that this perpetual failure — from which only God rescues the failing — is not consistent with his doctrine that the Redemption is also an historical action, the very essence of the "historical": the union of the metaphysical and the historical. But for the God who breaks his bonds, man is broken on a wheel that turns for-

ever. So does Berdyaev conceive human destiny, and in doing so I think he turns back to that pre-revelation cyclic conception of the world process, instead of developing the implications of irruption of the Son of God into the historical world of fallen men. I do not mean to suggest that history is not in fact replete with the sorriest failures, nor that the destiny of each generation of men is not tragic. It is most certainly the lot of man to fail and to fail tragically; but his history is not all failure. There is another aspect of the record in the history of the redemptive action upon human society, in the rewards won for us by the saints, in the ripening and picking of the choice fruits of the Faith. There is an historically progressive Redemption, which can be both seen and measured if one looks at it in the right perspective of time.

Now this exaggerated mysticism and historical pessimism are related — and casually related, I believe — to yet a third grave weakness in Berdyaev's thought. He apparently accepts as valid the Spenglerian conception of cultures as spiritual organisms which come into being, mature, and die in obedience to the laws of all organic destiny. He accepts also Spengler's thesis that "civilization" is the doom of every "culture", and indeed he prizes this as the special Russian contribution to philosophy. "Every culture", he tells us, "at a certain stage of its development discloses a principle which saps its own spiritual foundations. . . . [It] develops a tendency to disintegrate in its religious and spiritual foundations. . . . This is achieved through the process of 'enlightenment' which is common to both ancient and later Occidental culture. And this fact reveals the fatal dialectic

inherent in culture. . . . It exhausts itself spiritually and wastes its energies. It passes from the 'organic' to the 'critical' stage of its existence." This latter stage is "civilization"; it is the stage in which western culture is now well advanced, and therefore the end is in sight.

But is this true? Are cultures organisms? And if we say they are, how much light does that throw upon their nature? Mystical though it is, I too incline to the Berdyaev-Spengler concept, but I do not believe the laws of the destiny of cultures have yet been revealed. And surely God's choice of the classical culture of Hellenistic-Roman antiquity as the garment, so to speak, for His Sacramental Life on earth liberated that culture from the fatal cycle of destiny. Did that culture really die, and was our culture (now said to be disintegrating) born, as Spengler has said, in Western Europe about the year 900? I see no reason for thinking so, for our culture is that of Christianized classicism and it is still very much alive. There are excrescences upon and around it; there are alien infusions within it; there are detached and decaying parts of it lying about. But it has its continuous organic life; it has its unbroken institutions and its religion which is its soul; it has its memory that goes back to its origins. Many times has it appeared to be approaching death, but it has always recovered, purging and renewing its life not from without but from within. The atheistic elements of modern civilization do not signify the death of our culture, but only new problems for it to solve. We are men of Christendom, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. Whatever may be the fate of other

cultures, we should know by this time that our culture does not die. Belloc's famous thesis in his *Europe and the Faith* is a far better interpretation of our history than is this Spengler-Berdyaev thesis of organic decay and destiny.

Such are the chief complaints which I believe may be justly lodged against this study in the philosophy of history, although in bringing them forward I do not mean to suggest that the latest Berdyaev book is not a truly great book. It is a masterpiece of modern thought, one of the really mature fruits of the European mind. Some error it undoubtedly contains, but that can neither detract from its profundity nor obscure the nobility of mind and devotion to truth and holiness with which every page of it is illumined.

Roy Campbell: Romantic Paradox

GEOFFREY STONE

ROMANTICISM continues to dominate the literature of our day. Fashions change, of course, and the postures and figures of the first half of the last century are no longer the style; but of essential change there has been little, and the noble savage is the same man despite his Moscow uniform of latest cut. Whether the poet has retreated into the cloud-cuckoo land of aestheticism, or taken his stand on the meaner plane of a "collective society", he is still the beautiful soul in revolt against an evil society, whose restraints hamper the expression of his natural goodness. If an aesthete, he has despaired of this world entirely and retired to a perfect realm where nothing is but his thinking makes it so; if a leftist (which is what the aesthete naturally becomes when he descends to a very material earth, having found the atmosphere of pure art too rare), he but delays the projection of his private vision upon the world until enough blood has been spilt and enough churches burned. Both aesthete and leftist share the romantic view of man; they hold that if only the stopper of accepted ways can be removed, the land will be flooded with milk and honey from the well of the noble (and natural) self.

In the midst of this drably similar crew, Roy Campbell occupies a curious place; for he wears proudly the outmoded garments of romanticism and speaks in the loud tones of its lusty youth, rather than in the tired whimper of its sick old age. At a time when half

our poets speak so cryptically that they are not understood even by the critics who enumerate their obscurities, and when the other half seek to identify themselves with the voice of the subhuman creature to which industrialism has degraded the workman, Mr. Campbell declares:

*I will go stark: and let my meanings show
Clear as a milk-white feather in a crow
Or a black stallion on a field of snow,*

and declares it on horseback, wearing a broad-brimmed hat. His posture is certainly the stock romantic one, but he is worthy of notice because he has invested it with vigor and even with dignity.

Now the romantic posture is intrinsically one of defiance toward society, though everyone join in it and grow weary in its stance. But Mr. Campbell is defiant of the latter-day romantics who surround him; he takes the position of the forebears to belittle the descendants. He began with the customary bourgeois-baiting and exaltation of the poet:

*Lashing his laughter like a knotted scourge,
A poet of his own disdain is born
And dares among the rabble to emerge. . . .*
(Adamastor, 1930.)

He has found, however, that the great public are not the only ones who cannot "learn to look on beauty unashamed"; the self-appointed intellectual élite are in no wise better, perhaps even worse, for they profane the shrine they profess to serve. Doubting them, he has examined sceptically their intellectual premisses, and in the end rejected most current notions, to establish himself on a groundwork of ideas decidedly

classical in view of the frank romanticism of his own poetry. The disparity between critical ideas and poetic practice is fairly common in an age whose prevailing sensibility often runs counter to the strictest logic. Messrs. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis have both been accused of this failing — unjustly, I think — and Mr. Campbell is an ardent follower of the second. In the case of Mr. Campbell, where the disjunction seems actually to exist, a personal explanation is perhaps to be sought; and this seems justified for the "I" of his poems is plainly to be identified with a young South African who lives in Provence and earns his living by fishing and bull-fighting.

The circumstances of his life immediately make of Roy Campbell a "poet" in the Byronic tradition. From his autobiography *Broken Record* ("broken" is intended in the sense of "disconnected"), one learns that Mr. Campbell's youth in South Africa was filled with much physical activity in the way of hunting and fishing; that in the first year of his married life he existed in a lonely part of Wales by poaching, later by lecturing workers (five of them) on Shakespeare; and that at present he combines, in the South of France, the writing of poetry with activity in the arena, herding cattle, and water jousting. Byron's boxing and Rupert Brooke's cricket are recalled by his declaration that the poet and the athlete do the same thing in different spheres. "Athletes," he says in his book on bull-fighting, *Taurine Provence*, "the poets of action, are inspired equally, as poets are, by an inward necessity to surpass, and to perform feats of excellence and skill: and like poets the greater the necessity is, the more they will undertake. . . . So

men in whom the heroic principle works will be driven by their very excess of vitality to flaunt their defiance in the face of death or danger, as in the modern arena."

Bull-fighting, indeed, occupies a central place in his *Weltanschauung*, and, though a recent convert to the Catholic Church, he aligns Mithras in spirit with Christ. The terminology of the bull-ring is frequent in his poetry, and life itself assumes the aspect of a cunning and powerful beast, against whom man must pit his skill and whom he must slay, though life is not "bestial" — the bull himself is noble and an object of beauty; his death is justified only because it can be the occasion of a superior beauty and nobility. Here, of course, might be seen a sort of blood mysticism (one remembers D. H. Lawrence's high regard for Mithras), anti-rational in tendency. Such it would probably be accounted by the majority of our critics, for Mr. Campbell has expressed approval of Fascism and, by the testimony of his verse, has recently been fighting on the Christian side in the Spanish war: fascism, in leftist thought, is a manifestation of unreason, since it upsets the neat sophistries of the Marxian prognosis. But Mr. Campbell does not present his praise of the physical in opposition to the intellectual; rather he condemns the opposition set up between them by modern life, insisting that both intellectual and physical activity should come out of an essential joy in activity, out of man's sense of himself as a creature possessed of will and reason. He is not a philosopher, but the underlying idea seems to be of a necessary unity between soul or form and its physical embodiment, a feeling for the "whole" quite different in

quality from, for instance, Waldo Frank's muddled pantheism: "Again, as perhaps a hundred times before, the dregs of the self-destructive pedestrian civilization will have to come to its horsemen, shepherds, and fishermen for its culture, poetry, law, and order, for the radios of God have always spoken out of dorps like Medina and Nazareth: and at the present day how superior the poetry of the Irish, the Boer, the South American, the Provencal, and the Catalonian, is to the dilettante, broken-down, pedantic, and unhappy stuff of modern England."

The equestrian figure also bulks large in his poetry, and he sets off the mounted man, skillful, physically strong, and accustomed to wide horizons, against the hiker, the dweller in cities, and the tourist by train. Certain other figures turn up again and again in Mr. Campbell's verse, and represent a fairly coherent symbolism: the bull has been mentioned, and sometimes merges into the figure of the sun, which again may be Mithras or Christ, and the whole notion of light is, as it was with the mystics, bound up with the idea of the final aspect of reality. Occasionally in his latest book, *Mithraic Emblems*,* the symbolism degenerates into an unpleasant sentimentality, as when the Crucifixion is called the "final toss" on "the black horns of the cross". And the expression of religious concepts in cowboy language often strikes the falsely hearty note of manufactured *genre* poetry. Yet in the title-poem of *Mithraic Emblems* this symbolism is combined into a strangely effective work, perhaps open to the accusation of a Keatsian lushness, but reinforced by a

* MITHRAIC EMBLEMS by Roy Campbell (BORISWOOD, London. 175 pp. 7/6).

philosophy that Keats's youth did not achieve. The emblems referred to are figures on the fountain at Tourne described by Mistral, whose words serve as an epigraph: a bull beset by a dog, a serpent, a youth with a sword, over whom presides a raven. Symbolism is by its nature indefinitely extensible; it conveys a manifold meaning beyond the rational limits of language; so that a prose interpretation of what Mr. Campbell intends by his sonnet sequence cannot be much more than a parody, and its substance is better suggested by quoting a single sonnet:

*Enemy of my inward night
and victor of its bestial Signs
whose arm against the Bull designs
the red veronicas of light:
your cape a roaring gale of gold
in furious auroras swirled,
the scarlet of its outward fold
is of a dawn beyond the world—
a sky of intellectual fire
through which the stricken beast may view
its final agony aspire
to sun the broad aeolian blue—
my own lit heart, its rays of fire,
the seven swords that run it through.*

It will be evident from this that Mr. Campbell's imagery, while distinctly his, is not especially peculiar; allowing for the figures derived from the bull-ring, from herding, and from life in South Africa, his imagery belongs to that tradition of style in English verse which springs from Milton and which, by its grandeur and sense of spaciousness, appealed to the earlier romantic poet. With Mr. Eliot's rehabilita-

tion of the metaphysicals and the lesser Tudor-Stuart dramatists, this tradition has somewhat fallen into disfavor and the run of poets today cultivate a microscopic and conceited style. While this has been far from an entire evil, for the Miltonic style tends in inept hands to become merely "poetical" and divorced from common speech, where the spring of poetry's vigor lies, the disappearance of the grand style has led to a willful cultivation of eccentricity. Mr. Campbell's first book, *The Flaming Terrapin*, is a sort of mythology of the creation of the world, an account of the cruise of a great terrapin through wildernesses of water, but the real purpose served by the poem's story is to provide a framework on which is hung a crowded series of gigantic tropes and metaphors. "A poetic tornado," Mr. Campbell has been called by Miss Sitwell (he does not return the admiration), but *The Flaming Terrapin*, despite its formlessness, is not merely a great wind of verbiage. Beyond poetry lies the problem of belief, and much modern verse has been vitiated because the poet has not looked on a meaningful universe, and what might have served as the objects of poetic experience have been only stocks and stones, given no significance by place in a larger scheme. Such a difficulty is not Mr. Campbell's, who renews the depleted word by his belief in what formerly gave it significance; the fury of his speech is not in its sound alone, but comes from a fervently held view of nature as intelligible.

The animal and the human trope is a favorite device with him, indicating the centrality of man and the living in his thought. He does not subscribe to the dogma that poetry can only touch reality by drawing its

figures from the precincts of laboratory and factory:

*Let Spender over wowser-problems fret
And sentimentalize the fragrant Pet—
Hear how it whistles "jug, puff-puff, tereu"
Better than any nightingale could do.
Smell it, my lad: if you want rarer treats—
The fragrant leather of those third class seats.
They never see a train or a steamboat
But seem to get a tightening of the throat,
They never see a junk petarding coal
But get a sort of shiver in the soul.
Why should men sentimentalize their queens
When they can be platonic with machines?*

Or as he puts it more broadly in his autobiography:

The substitution of machines for animals cannot be entirely successful. We see that it degrades the human personality and body, and causes us to interpret human things in a mechanical way. When we contrast cubism with the great equestrian statues and poems of the Renaissance, which represent the highest flights of the human imagination, we see represented the grade of our mechanical civilization in comparison with its equestrian rival. . . . The pathetic figure of Rosinante which stands as a symbol of the war between the two cultures, seen in its most pessimistic light, does not present half such a broken-backed rickety spectacle as our machine-made civilization, which only covers a small portion of the globe, and on whose dwindling verges the sons and descendants of Rosinante gallop about with the last retainers of our culture and chivalry. It is difficult living inside the industrial belt for any human being to conceive of himself as the living inhabitant of a Star, and not a mere apparatus, but a fiery and spiritual being with marvellous appetites and resources for gratifying them.

The collapse of the industrial-capitalist world is a frequent theme of Mr. Campbell's poetry, especially in *Mithraic Emblems*. Here again the romantic posture of defiance serves him well, and the cowboy seated upon his horse hears the voice of the rails speaking:

*From fog-red docks, the sink of rotting drains,
Where, tipsy giants, reel the workless cranes:
Where in dead liners, that the rust attacks,
Sprung decks think back beyond the saw and axe,
And masts put on the green of country lanes. . . .*

*These tons of metal rusting in the rain
(Iron on strike) are singing one refrain:
Let steel hang idle, burning rust devour,
Till Beauty smile upon the face of Power
And Love unsheathe me from the rust again. . . .*

In a number of other poems in the same book, Mr. Campbell repeats that steel will be delivered from rusty industrialism to flash again as the blue Excalibur of courage, gold will escape from the usurers to glow as the metal of beauty.

Mr. Campbell, it should be evident by now, is also a poet of honest hate. "A hater is always a lover too. Hate belongs to the same quality of appreciation as love. Nobody who does not hate can love." The last sentence remains equally true reversed, and in defense of what he loves Mr. Campbell has written some vigorous satire. His two longest satirical poems are *The Wayzgoose* and *The Georgiad*. The Wayzgoose "occurs annually in S.A. It appears to be a vast corroboree of journalists, and to judge from their own reports of it, it combines the functions of a bun-fight, an Eisteddfod, and an Olympic contest." To Mr.

Campbell it is the occasion for a furious rout of the "counter-jumping" intellectuals of Capetown and Durban. *The Georgiad* revolves around a hero called Androgyno, who is reminiscent of Mrs. Woolf's Orlando, and of fifty other literary figures in England who exist off paper, if not with much more reality. Androgyno's adventures result in satire of a strength and accuracy that only Wyndham Lewis (in another medium) equals today. Mr. Campbell employs the couplet of Dryden and Pope, and, as a careless though naturally very gifted craftsman, must suffer by the comparison, but he does convincingly show that satire is not in need of new forms to preserve its vigor; once more he suffuses the traditional forms with life by the very vitality of his own belief and shows that, while it is something consciously imposed from without, form is dead if it is not a reflection of the spirit. His satire, indeed, I would rank above his lyric pieces; but, given a poet of varied talent, it is perhaps inevitable in an age of numerous and conflicting standards that his satire should prove superior to other forms of verse, allowing as it does a greater didactic content by which to indicate its intellectual bias and straiten the interpretation to be set upon the poem's meaning. The intellectual nature of satire makes it depend less than the lyric upon words from which a common emotional response is expected.

This matter of the assured emotional response is of importance in Mr. Campbell's political verse. Political verse is, on the whole, bad, and most communist verse of course on a lower level still. The partisan spirit leads to rhetorical overweighting; there is a tendency to replace honest persuasion (which skillful poetic

statement can be) with loud emphasis. But if the political issue is reduced by the poet to its central human concern, verse dealing with it can rise to fine heights, as do William Watson's two magnificent sonnets, "The Soudanese" and "The English Dead". Lack of restraint places Mr. Campbell's poems on this summer's fighting in Toledo below Sir William's but he too derives his strength from a sincere appeal to traditional Western feelings; the objects of his regard are united with those fixed centers of reverence which we can disavow only for barbarism:

*Toledo, when I saw you die
And heard the roof of Carmel crash,
A spread-winged phoenix from its ash
The Cross remained against the sky!
With horns of flame and haggard eye
The mountain vomited with blood,
A thousand corpses down the flood
Were rolled gesticulating by,
And high above the roaring shells
I heard the silence of your bells
Who've left these broken stones behind
Above the years to make your home,
And burn, with Athens and with Rome,
A sacred city of the mind.*

Poetry is more than a beautiful and meaningless succession of words, more than an example of the operation of a special type of sensibility; it reflects and comments upon human experience, which is always a matter of right and wrong, and a valid test of its effectiveness cannot lose sight of this. The sonnet quoted above probably is not great poetry, but by this test it lies in regions near to it.

Mr. Campbell has a lot to account for on the debit side. His verse is plainly written in haste, and speed is a worthier attribute in the arena than in the muses' garden. For all his facility in language, he is apt to repeat too often a good phrase, as when in three different poems a train at night is found stitching the world with threads of fire. His scorn of the unworthy at times degenerates to mere bravado, bringing in its train statements that are not poetry but noisy rhetoric. Relying on a romantic intensity of feeling rather than a classical balance of form to sustain his poems, his verse too often tends to collapse under its own weight, or dissolve in the mind after the first impact of its rich imagery has passed. He has imposed his own rhythm on a fairly regular iambic line, but not always with that imagination which can convert a standard meter into something peculiar to a single poem. His emphatic rhyme is not without monotony, and to achieve a rhyme he will on occasion resort to stratagems that even Browning would not have condoned. As a result of all this, his verse is distressingly uneven, and will descend from a pure and perceptive lyric note to he-man swashbuckling. These things, of course, are consequent upon his romantic posture: though he inveighs against those who gaze into mirrors, his own verse bears too little testimony to interior discipline and partakes of the fitful nature of the moment's inspiration, with the inevitable attempt to justify the work simply because it is something personally and deeply felt. Yet in balancing the ledger, the ultimate figures must be on the credit side, I believe, and the reason, paradoxically enough, is romantic and personal. For the small residue of fine poetry

that is to be found in Mr. Campbell's work comes, as it were, out of his native sanity, uncorrupted by our dominant industrialism and the morbid intellectual fashions it breeds. From his pose of romantic defiance has grown his defiance for all that originally supported that pose, and his vision of the poet as the lonely wayfarer seems to have led him back to the haunts of men.

Perhaps it is invidious to say that Mr. Campbell's promise remains yet to be fulfilled, but he himself has pointed to the direction his talent must take if its athletic exuberance is not to end in exhaustion. If "conscious power, privilege, and authority" are to be re-established in society, imposing their lawful dictates against the renegade by force when necessary, there must exist in the new society an élite which willingly submits to a similar discipline, rigorously applying it from within, and the poet who expresses the spirit of that aristocracy will by the example of his work show the wisdom and beauty of such restraint.

Books by Roy Campbell:

- The Flaming Terrapin* (1924)
- The Wayzgoose* (1928)
- Adamastor* (1930)
- The Georgiad* (1931)
- Taurine Provence* (1932)
- Flowering Reeds* (1933)
- Broken Record* (1934)
- Mithraic Emblems* (1936)

A Sociologist in Eden

DONALD DAVIDSON

IN GEORGIA, about a hundred miles south of Atlanta, is a plantation region to which, in one or two fugitive sketches, I once made bold to apply the name of Eden. There were two reasons why this name suggested itself.

One was the nature of the country itself. The climate is mild and ingratiating. Winter there is hardly more rigorous than the autumn of the upland country which ends about at Atlanta. Field crops and flowers grow the year long. With a little luck one can have fresh vegetables from his own garden for a Christmas dinner in Eden, and without fail he can have narcissus and the rich blooms of *camellia japonica*. Summers are hot, but the heat is moderated by airs from the coast, and drouths are rare. The land is fertile, and the planters do not seem to abuse its great productivity. The crops are cotton, of course, and much besides — the cereals, especially corn and wheat; peaches, pecans, peanuts; vegetables in trucking quantities, asparagus, sweet and Irish potatoes, cabbage and collards, turnips, peppers; sugar cane and sorghum cane; and other things in abundance, though grass and hay do not flourish as well as in the uplands. There is still good hunting. There is still good timber. And it is a beautiful land, a land of long-leaf pines and water-oaks and red earth beneath skies of ever-changing color. And the people are the best of all. Like Cousin Roderick and Sister Caroline (in whom

I once attempted to epitomize their qualities) they have the graciousness and repose of the old Southern tradition without the pretentiousness that came to characterize some of its later stages. They have nothing to do with the "moonlight and magnolias" tradition of cheap movies and anti-Southern propaganda. In short, they represent the better side, at once homely and fine, of the plantation South, miraculously preserved from the General Shermans of the eighteen-sixties and the nineteen-thirties. Last, in nothing do they seem more admirable than in their relations with the Negroes, who here outnumber white people nearly three to one. The old master-slave relation, in this land of Eden, seems to have developed here into nothing so alarming as, say, in Arkansas. The old feeling of white responsibility and of black loyalty and devotion seems to have carried over, partially at least, into the modern régime, and one would think this the last place to which the agitator and reformer would ever have the impulse to penetrate.

Such were the impressions I gained from a residence of about ten months in this country just at the time when Hoover was going out and Roosevelt was coming in. I did not, of course, make a "survey". I passed out no questionnaire sheets. But I heard much with my own ears and saw much with my own eyes. It was what any normal person could not help hearing and seeing informally, upon being made almost a member of the family and invited to feel perfectly at home. It would have seemed a violation to "write up" this Eden as places get written up nowadays, and so, when in the course of certain attempts at regional comparisons I referred to it, I veiled its identity and

location, for I wanted to save the region and the individuals in it from even the small portion of the curse of modern publicity that might — it was just possible — come from an obscure essay. That was the second reason for calling this country an Eden.

But how vain was my concern, how feeble my conception of the all-seeing eye of sociology! I now discover that the wise serpent, the Light-Bringer himself, was in that region before and after my visit, not for purposes of temptation so much as to focus upon Eden the central blaze of a high-powered social-scientific investigation.

The results — with statistical tables, photographic illustrations, maps, prefaces, foreword, introduction, text, conclusion, and index — are now available to the world in a 400-page book, *Preface to Peasantry*,* by Arthur Raper, Research and Field Secretary of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. From a complicated statement in the preface one gathers that the book grew out of a doctoral dissertation which was expanded to fit a larger scheme for study of the Negro in industry and agriculture. The committee in charge of this scheme were as follows: Will W. Alexander, who has just been appointed by President Roosevelt to replace Rexford G. Tugwell in the resettlement administration; Edwin R. Embree of the Rosenwald Foundation; Charles S. Johnson, professor of sociology at Fisk University. Although the preface does not say so, the book ties up, at least unofficially, with the line of research which has been fol-

* PREFACE TO PEASANTRY: A TALE OF TWO BLACK BELT COUNTIES by Arthur F. Raper (UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS. 423 pp. \$3.50).

lowed out for some years under the auspices of the Social Research Council and under the immediate administration of a Southern Regional Committee. Howard Odum's *The Southern Regions of the United States*, Rupert Vance's *Human Geography of the South*, Kendrick and Arnett's *The South Looks at Its Past* are examples of how useful this general line of study has been.

This setting will serve to identify Mr. Raper as one of the younger group of Southern sociologists and economists whose leadership seems to be in the direction of the University of North Carolina. Upon an elaborate foundation of research these men are shaping up a heaven-towering superstructure of social reform. The indication, in *Southern Regions*, is that the reform is eventually to be carried out under two six-year plans, administered by a regional planning board modelled after the TVA.

But Mr. Raper's part in such projects is rather special, and I am none too certain that, in a strict sense, he belongs in the array mentioned above. He is interested in the race problem above everything else. His first book, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, is a detailed case study of about a dozen lynchings. In this book the case studies are as circumstantial and dispassionate as one could ask for social science to be, but they are preceded by a lengthy introduction which contains as much hysteria as science. One discovers by reading the introduction that Mr. Raper is not much interested, as sociologist, in the *mores* which he has been at such pains to record. All that he wants to do is to stop lynching by any means whatsoever. But with all this passionate concern, he seems to have no

condemnation for the crimes which, in the South, are sometimes punished by the spectacular and brutal lynching process, and apparently he is not much worked up over what happens (though it is often terrible beyond description) to the victims of the criminal. It is the method of punishment that engages his complete attention and converts him into an advocate. He is shocked at the mob who with reciprocal savagery burn the Negro rapist to death; he is perfectly calm if the reciprocal savagery takes place by judicial process, and the rapist is burned to death in an electric chair before a few quaking witnesses, physicians, and newspapermen. Sociology is queer; it is moved by some things and unmoved by other things. But the point is, sociology is hardly entitled to use the literary word, *tragedy*, unless it is prepared to be catholic in its emotions. But it would be more correctly scientific, I am sure, if it were moved by nothing and could remain perfectly matter-of-fact. I find this partiality a little odd, but I can guess at one possible explanation. It has something to do with the fact that Mr. Raper turns his investigation in his new book upon two counties, in one of which there has not been a lynching for twenty-five years, in the other for fifteen years. (The figures are his own.)

But these introductory marks should be taken partly by way of contrast. Mr. Raper's new book is far, far pleasanter reading, even with some dark passages, than his earlier one. It suggests to me that some of the Southern sociologists who are interested in the Negro may have decided that their old approach is not valid or will not get results. They are now centering their attention on the economic position of the

Negro, and, since that is not to be separated from the economic position of the South as a whole, they have become concerned with the tenant problem and, beyond that, with the general agrarian problem. This is a wise step, if by such means they can bring the special race problem into the perspective where it belongs. The method will get results unobtainable by force bills, interracial committees, and horatory propaganda.

The thesis of *Preface to Peasantry*, as stated in W. W. Alexander's foreword, is that the old cotton kingdom of the Southeast is well on the way to collapse. Its soil has been exhausted by misuse of the land — a misuse due, Mr. Raper claims, to the plantation system, as a system, and to no other cause. Even before the boll weevil came, we are told, the Southeast was losing in competition with newer cotton regions, since it had to spend too much money on fertilizer. Then the boll weevil put the final ruinous touches. In the "collapse" of the cotton culture, everybody has gone down, but the Negro and the landless white tenants have gone down farthest of all, because, where life was getting precarious for everybody, no special attention could be spared to the least fortunate. The solution, Mr. Alexander says (and Mr. Raper in greater detail affirms this), is a restoration of the land through diversified farming, and a rehabilitation of the people based upon a new land policy which will afford "an opportunity for ownership of the land by the man *who works it*". (The italics are Mr. Alexander's.) The frontispiece of the book is a photograph of two cotton wagons on a Georgia road. Underneath it is the following caption: "The Black

Belt's riddle — To whom does this cotton belong: to the tenant farmer who grew it, to the landlord who furnished the tenant, or to the banker who financed the landlord?"

In his presentation of this thesis, Mr. Raper confines himself to a survey of two Georgia counties. One of these, Greene County, lies slightly southeast of Atlanta, in the lower Piedmont region not far from the South Carolina line. Its history, as an older plantation region settled in Revolutionary times, is apparently one of progressive ruination ever since the Sixties, when it must have suffered somewhat as did the "Tara" region of Miss Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. I know nothing at firsthand of Greene County, and therefore shall not discuss it here. But Macon County, Mr. Raper's other example, is the county I know as a land of Eden. It is "younger" by some fifty years than Greene County, and to this fact alone Mr. Raper seems to ascribe its sociological misbehavior in failing to decay quite as rapidly as Greene County. The plantation system, he explains, has not yet had time to destroy itself in Macon County. But he has little doubt that it will do so, and that soon. A glance through his sociological microscope shows the decay germs already busily gnawing.

What differences are there between the (doubtless) inferior alchemical pottering of a humanistic, or literary, interpretation of Eden and the (surely) superior interpretative method of the trained social scientist? It will be most interesting, I tell myself as I begin this book, to see what the sociologist has to say about a region somewhat closer than the Fiji Islands.

It is all in the neatest possible order: geographic,

historic, and social factors; annual cash income, per family; housing and sanitation; size of holdings in relation to fertility of soil; forms of tenancy; school-houses; lodges; Federal relief; and so on. Some of it is only an extension of what one can find in various other books; but some of it, particularly the detail, is new.

But as one goes from humanism to sociology, something happens that is like what happened to the unfortunate young man in Tennyson's "Locksley Hall": "The individual withers, and the world is more and more." Where are Cousin Roderick and Sister Caroline and all their kin and friends? Where are the black individuals, surely also individuals: the grinning E Pluribus, well-named, one of many of Uncle Amos's numerous progeny; Emmett, who could "read" the passion flower and show you, in a sprig of vine with a single bloom, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles on the road to Calvary; "Preacher", who was trusted with curing the meat; Tom, the gifted of tongue, who beguiled his landlord (who happened to be a landlady) into buying him a mule, and then into lumber to make a stall for the said mule, and next into share-cropping a bit of land which had been intended for horticulture or floriculture, not for cotton? All these notable people have gone down in ruins with the cotton economy and become statistical items lumped indistinguishably with the notable and unnotable in tables and summaries. Macon County has become a type and stopped being a beloved place to which men cling with more than rational attachment. And though everybody except the sociologist knows that X's plantation is not to be men-

tioned in the same breath as Y's, there is nothing here to tell the difference. Negroes are wage-hands, croppers, renters, or owners. Familiar landmarks have disappeared. One would never know that this is Macon County. It might as well be Zero County, where a man needs a map to get about, and where anything you say (I warn you, this is the law), no matter how carelessly dropped, will be used against you.

This is of course the defect of sociology. It cannot examine human ways without indulging in abstractions which to the lay reader seem to dehumanize. But this paper is not an attack upon sociology in its rightful capacity. There is no use in raising objections to a useful science as long as its practitioners pursue science, not history, literature, or religion. At the same time we may be grateful if at times the sociologist is not too stiffly scientific and wanders off into bits of reporting which have some literary characteristics. In his article, "Sociology and the Black Belt", in *THE AMERICAN REVIEW* of December, 1934, Mr. John Crowe Ransom noted this tendency in connection with a book by Professor Charles S. Johnson. Mr. Raper also has such inadvertent moments, or perhaps at times deliberately indulges himself, so that we get a little of the flavor of life in Macon County. For example:

A Negro wage hand bought a plug of Taylor's special tobacco and a plug of Brown Mule. He put the latter in his pocket with no wrapping on it. "There is always more chewers than buyers," he said, "so I always has some cheap backer loose in my pocket—it takes less when it's been sweated on."

But these moments are few. For the most part Mr. Raper is engaged in plain, very solemn analysis and presentation. On that ground, then, it is necessary to meet him. Since he insists on ponderable measurements, what is his standard for measuring? How does he apply it to the matters which he groups under such headings as "Planes of Living", "Man-Land Relations", "Population Movements", "The New Deal", and so on?

A difficulty at once arises. It is hard to tell whether this sociologist has a uniform standard, since in one paragraph he may be a hard-headed pragmatist and in the next a soft-headed humanitarian idealist. Now he is a scientist, content merely to heap up, under classified headings, mountains of fact about population trends or housing conditions; but now he is an advocate, hurling thunderbolts of opinion over his mountains of fact. At one moment he deals with tangible matters like health and income; at another, he has gone adventuring among "attitudes".

In this respect Mr. Raper is like some other sociologists who explore things contemporary and near at hand. His anxiety to get quick results from his findings is greater than his discriminating desire to see just what he has found. The Macon County people are not away off yonder like Margaret Mead's Samoans. They are only two or three hours' ride from Mr. Raper's Atlanta office. The temptation to chide them and make social prescriptions for them is irresistible. It is obvious that Mr. Raper's attitude toward such temptation must at best be described as coyly yielding rather than sternly ascetic. But when one searches about to discover him in the act of pronouncing the

gospel word of salvation, one finds him committed to nothing very precise. We must learn by implication what standard of life, material and nonmaterial, Mr. Raper wants the Macon Countians to measure up to.

There are hints of the standard in passages like the following:

The city's working family has advantages unknown to the farm tenant, such as public hospitalization, public outdoor nurse service, public clinics, and public school facilities infinitely superior to those provided in the rural section where many of the white and practically all the Negro children attend one-teacher schools.

And more hints in this passage:

Though one Negro farmer in Macon has a windmill which pumps water into his yard and barn, not one in either county has a cotton gin, peanut picker, tractor, saw-mill, Delco light plant, or stationary gasoline engine. Just as the work not done by power-driven machinery must be done by work animals, that not done by work animals must be done by members of the farm family.

It is clear from such observations, as from much else in the book, that Mr. Raper looks at the Macon County scene through urban eyes. He has an urban standard, or, more than that, the standard of an urban center which has the means and inclination to go a long way towards "socializing" medicine, education, and perhaps more besides. He does not in his own mind concede that there are or ought to be any great differences, inherent in the two situations, between city life and country life today. At the utmost he will concede only a difference of *Machinery*. He thinks

of a farm as a well-capitalized investment that uses tractors instead of steam cranes.

Where did he get such a standard and the "attitude" that goes with it? Not from Macon County, by any means. Not from the South, where by no means all the individual white cotton farmers can afford a great deal of power-driven machinery or find it, in all cases, necessary to success. Mr. Raper is not estimating a Southern situation in Southern terms. He is divesting himself of his Southern bias, if he has any, and is substituting, not the pure objectivity that we should expect, but a different kind of bias.

What bias this is can be seen from the agitation to which Mr. Raper gives way whenever he comes up against the problem of race relations. It appears in his repeated insistence that the Negro, particularly the Negro cropper, renter, and wage hand, suffers from some causeless, totally irrational "exploitation" at the hands of the white planter and the plantation system. Witness the following passage:

The Emancipation Proclamation by no means eradicated distinctions felt by both Negroes and whites, nor did it change the paradoxical feelings of affection and devotion which have always existed between many members of both races, as is shown in the following incidents.

"Stand up! Stand up! Can't you see it's a white man?" stormed a stout Negro woman to her pupils when she answered a knock at the schoolhouse door and saw a white man there. Bewildered, the visitor asked the children to sit down—he had little expected such obsequiousness, even in Greene County.

The clue to Mr. Raper's bias is in the word *para-*

doxical. Why should the affection be paradoxical? Why should the unnamed white visitor be bewildered? The "feelings of affection" and the manners here called "obsequious" are commonplace in the plantation South, as Mr. Raper well knows. In consideration of the business that he is about, we could understand his trying to suppress his own Southern viewpoint, but why can he not state the facts without coloring them? A physicist does not say that the magnet *paradoxically* attracts the iron filings!

Sometimes Mr. Raper notes an isolated fact without comment, in such a way as might invite a false generalization, as, for example, when he says: "In another field there was a thirteen-year-old boy with a hoe; he had been hoeing seven years." The instance suggests some rather brutal and debilitating form of child labor, but a boy hoeing in Macon County should suggest no such generalization. Agricultural tasks are in many cases not too complicated or arduous to be undertaken, without harm, by children, and they change with the seasons. This boy did not hoe the year round, he did not hurt himself a-hoeing, he probably loafed more than he worked. If he had been a cotton-mill worker, Mr. Raper's concern might have been justified.

He is equally naïve, or assumes naïveté, over methods of cultivation in Macon County. The methods are "primitive", for the farms are not "mechanized". Laborers chop cotton with a hoe and pick cotton by hand. The land is scarcely ever turned with two-horse plows. It is "a one-horse civilization". But Mr. Raper omits to note that the deft and special process of chopping cotton — in which thinning, weeding,

cultivating, and replanting go on together — can only be done efficiently with a hoe. It is just as if Mr. Raper should say of Cousin Roderick: "Look, how primitive! The man chews with his teeth!" As for cotton picking by hand — the mechanical cotton picker, of which elsewhere Mr. Raper has a doubtful word to say, is justly viewed with scepticism in the Southeast. And possibly the very up-to-date farmers in Macon County do not more often use the two-horse plow simply because the two-horse plow is not needed except in special cases. Their soil is loose and sandy. Where it has been frequently cultivated it can almost be turned with a stick.

Elsewhere is another kind of thing — a subtle suggestion, a slight alteration in emphasis. Mr. Raper does not say that relations between the two races are generally peaceful, partly because the white man, after long experience with the Negro, is indulgent toward him, thinking him to be a less responsible person than a white man. Mr. Raper, instead, says this:

The general peaceful relations between the two races in these counties rest, to no small degree, *upon the Negro's acceptance* of a role in which he is neither moral nor immoral—just nonmoral; neither saint nor sinner—just a rowdy; neither deceitful nor trustworthy, just lazy and easygoing; neither slave nor free man, just a "nigger". (Italics mine.)

The phrase italicized changes completely the usual emphasis — as John Brown of Ossawatimie once changed it. Possibly I may be reading into this and other passages a meaning not intended to be there. I should be glad to be proved wrong. But Mr. Raper's

bias is inescapable. One finds it in still more astonishing outline in the bits of historical interpretation with which he garnishes his analyses — or in the items of historical interpretation that he neglects to put in.

The major theme of the book is the "decay" of the plantation system, and the consequent effect of this "decay" upon the land and the people. At the outset Mr. Raper speaks of the collapse of the plantation system and attributes this to "its exploitation of soil and labor". Later on, after a harangue in which he indicts the "landed oligarchy" for disfranchising the Negro, for opposing (he says) Negro education, and for holding the Negro "irredeemably inferior", he makes the following summary:

Such are the rationalizations and defense mechanisms which the controllers of the plantation system have fabricated into a philosophy which justifies and maintains the politically sterile "Solid South", and its outmoded agricultural structure based upon the human relations of a disintegrating feudalism.

The assumptions and sanctions of the plantation system have their price, and Greene and Macon counties have paid with one-crop farming, excessive erosion and depleted soil, low incomes for shifting landless workers, frequent bankruptcies for owners, emigration, and, most devastating of all, human relations built upon the idea that the vast majority of the population — the landless, whether white or Negro — are incapable of self-direction.

But before considering this summary, we should consider a really extraordinary passage in which Mr. Raper, while omitting any substantial reference to what went on in Reconstruction times, attributes the post-bellum "exploitation" of the Negro and the

slogan of "white supremacy" to some strange, insane desire to find a "scapegoat":

They [the planters] were in need of each other's constant sympathy. For their loss of property and power at home and prestige abroad they compensated partially by much talking and theorizing among themselves about the superiority of the Southern whites. They and their less refined successors — money-lenders and time merchants — have provided a white supremacy manifesto for the racial determinists of the South.

The various grievances of the Southern whites were heaped upon the inarticulate ex-slave; the white South's humiliation and poverty, its hatred of the Yankees and of the central government, along with its fears of the blacks, found a convenient scapegoat in the nominally free but defenseless Negro. And there, upon the back of the black man, most of the load has remained; for many politicians in government and business and religion have found the agitation of the race question the surest road to election.

One ought, I suppose, to be charitable with the errors of a man of Mr. Raper's earnestness and ability. But how can charity hold out against such garblings and wild imaginings? It would be charitable to say that Mr. Raper must have derived his knowledge of history from that eminent mythologizer, V. F. Calverton, or from Carl Carmer's journalistic slush. Such frenzied caricature takes us back to the days of the South-haters: Secretary Stanton, Ben Butler, and the oratorical Bob Ingersoll who thundered, in the election campaign of 1876: "Every man that shot down Union soldiers was a Democrat. . . . Every man that raised bloodhounds to pursue human

beings was a Democrat. . . . Shall the solid South . . . unified by assassination and murder, a South solidified by the shotgun — shall the solid South with the aid of a divided North control this great and splendid country?" Is it this kind of reckless anger that drives Mr. Raper to such distortions? Not even the most partisan of historians has ever made himself ridiculous by charging that Southern planters wreaked their baffled rage upon the Negro because there was nobody else feeble enough for them to be revenged upon.

It is hard to straighten out the general muddle and find the leading ideas and logical connections as they must exist in Mr. Raper's mind. There seem to be two main motifs, the economic and the social, and the chain of reasoning goes about like this. First, the plantation system has failed economically simply because it is a plantation system and for no other reason. Its faults have been inherent, all of them. No external causes have had anything to do with its decadence. And, second, the bad social conditions have something to do with a dervish-like trance to which Mr. Raper thinks the planters, out of motives of pure spite against the black man and the Yankee, have worked themselves up, and kept themselves worked up, unremittingly, for about seventy years. In this uncouth trance induced by their assumptions, rationalizations, and sanctions, they slash out at all and sundry, and do not mind cutting themselves to pieces in the process if they can only give full expression to their religious mania and, above all, revenge themselves upon the Negro.

If Southern planters had ever had the sharp ani-

mus toward the Negro that Mr. Raper describes, the northward, cityward emigration of the Negro would have started seventy years ago, and Macon County would now be devoid of Negro inhabitants, as are many of the mountain counties of Georgia and other states. If Mr. Raper thinks that the planters "keep down" the Negro by some complicated exercise of Machiavellian cunning, he is badly off the track. It would be nearer the actual sociological truth to say that something like the old master-slave relation hangs on merely because both races are used to it and like it. That sort of truth in the Macon County situation really deserves some sociological study of the sort that Mr. Raper has not even attempted; it would make an interesting contrast with the situation, say, in Chicago, St. Louis, Harlem, Arkansas. As for white supremacy, that is another social truth (it may be sociological too) which merits some honest contemplation, of a sort to which Mr. Raper has evidently not devoted himself. White supremacy has been used as a bogus political issue by a few charlatans, whose importance is negligible. But it has also been at times a real political issue — a veritable matter of life and death, indeed, when the course of events forced Southerners to consider on what terms a white South could survive at all. It first became a political issue because of pressure external to the South. It has not been a serious political issue for a long time, but it will again become just that if external pressure again makes it an issue.

And what of Mr. Raper's tremendous simplifications with regard to the plantation system in the role of destroyer? Here Mr. Raper's errors are less vicious,

if not to some degree excusable, for the system has bulked out prominently in many discussions, shallow and wise, and, like all well-established institutions, it is always getting blamed for sins of which it is not necessarily guilty.

If erosion and soil depletion are to be attributed to the inherent faults of the plantation system, and if small ownership will stop it, what of the small owners' places in the upper Tennessee Valley, where there is no plantation system at all? According to the TVA, small ownership there has not checked erosion and soil depletion. Nor has it done so in many other regions. In Middle Tennessee I can point out many a ruined field, not a part of a plantation system. And if bankruptcy, low incomes, and so forth are bodily secretions of the plantation system, why have the same phenomena appeared in all non-plantation agricultural areas, almost without exception?

Mr. Raper fails to distinguish between good farming and bad farming. He also fails to see that the disabilities of the plantation are also in some degree the disabilities of agriculture at large. He not only gives us a faulty interpretation of his facts, but he fails to gather all the relevant facts.

In his tale of the two Georgia counties he should have told how the survival of the plantation system is a consequence of the repossession of the Deep South by Southerners after the attempt to treat it as a conquered province had ceased. The post-bellum form of the plantation system, with its various relations between owner and tenant, was and is nothing more than a practical adjustment, an attempt to "carry on" within the Union, a product of defeat and reconcile-

ment, not of a conspiracy against the Negro. All this is clearly set forth in many books, notably in Rupert Vance's recent *Human Factors in the Cotton Culture*. But now, instead of Abolitionism, the plantation faces the subtler forces of Industrialism, which, while it holds out seemingly great rewards in the shape of markets, really sets the planter, as a producer of low-priced raw materials, at a great disadvantage as it renders him more and more a consumer of high-priced manufactured articles. The planter is in effect a colonial at the mercy of an imperialist. It is the imperializing industrialist who is ultimately to blame for the lowering of the tenant's status which Mr. Raper calls exploitation. The planter has been forced to adopt a cash relationship toward his tenants, and it is really not altogether his fault, or the fault of his system, that the cash relationship has not for a long time been bounteous.

Mr. Raper has nothing to say about such matters. He does not discourse upon the economic dependency of the South, although his contemporaries, Mr. Vance and Mr. Odum, have made much of it. In *Southern Regions* we may find that the Southeast, with about 21 per cent of the nation's population, has only 9 per cent of the nation's income. Mr. Raper does not consider the role of the tariff, of foreign markets, of world prices *vs.* domestic prices in the cotton economy. He does not instruct us in the matter of how recent increases in taxation have helped to drive Southern agriculture down hill, although Mr. Odum has collected figures to show that the largest percentages of tax increase in the nation have occurred in the Southeast. And there is also the new "high stand-

ard of living", which is to be figured in the same decline.

It is true that in his chapter, "The Exodus", Mr. Raper tells of enormous areas that have been sold for taxes or have fallen into the hands of loan companies. By 1934 or thereabouts, 17,000 acres in Greene County and about 20,000 in Macon County had been taken over by loan companies. In Green County the John Hancock Life Insurance Company had become the largest single landowner. But Mr. Raper considers these figures only in relation to Negro migration and the operation of the New Deal. In general his economic facts fail to get a broad and realistic interpretation. He cannot relate the shabbiness of tenant houses to the glorious upsurge of the Empire State Building or realize that the thirty or forty cents a day paid to the Negro wage hand may, in a sense, represent what is left when tribute has been paid to Detroit, Wall Street, and the American Federation of Labor.

These failures of interpretation grow out of Mr. Raper's predilections and his specialized sense of injustice. I should never want to fall into his error and say that such failures are inherent in sociology as a system. But sociologists, absorbed in their abstractions, sometimes do not realize how their great structures of fact may be invalidated by wrong assumptions. And that is the moment when sociology becomes dangerous. We must respect the sociologist when he is giving us real facts upon good assumptions, or perhaps upon no assumptions. For then, if his facts should prove to be in error, they can be corrected. But when his factual presentation is linked with false assumptions, he is not presenting facts at all; he is mythologiz-

ing. And it is extremely difficult to correct myths, all the more when they come to us in the disguise and with the great prestige of science. The whole thing is summed up in Blake's aphorism:

*A truth that's told with bad intent
Beats all the lies you can invent.*

Out of the same cause as the failure of interpretation arises also a failure of vision. Mr. Raper does not see, or certainly he leaves out, some of the pertinent facts. He has no urge to go a-sociologizing among the planters themselves. He is credulous toward the Negro point of view and skeptical toward the planter's point of view, and lets it alone. That is probably one reason why he fails to tell us that there is a marked difference between plantations, some being, let us say, good agrarian plantations, others being speculative, commercial, almost industrial. And there are many other little items about the housing, clothing, feeding, fueling, and doctoring of Negro tenants that he passes over lightly or simply omits.

What did Mr. Raper intend *Preface to Peasantry* to be: a sociological study, upon which, after mature verification, social changes might be based; or the program itself of social change, with supporting argument and evidence? If he intended the former, he has injured a valuable and ambitious study by being doctrinaire and emotional. This is a pity, for Mr. Raper is a good writer, and there are few books of sociology, in this special field, that are as lucid and systematic as his book is. But invariably, somewhere in the course of his smooth and matter-of-fact exposition, the cool

pointing finger of the expositor suddenly becomes the clenched fist of the propagandist. Thus, at the end of an admirable discussion of the status of churches, white and Negro, one is told that "the churches of both races are doubtless no more materially handicapped by economic conditions than they are paralyzed by race dogmas which rest upon the premise that Negroes are something less than normal human beings. Though they have adjusted their theology and philosophy to include their racial dogmas, the rural whites dislike to be faced with the Negro question, and but few of them can discuss local race conditions without some show of excitement, or resentment, or even rage." And neither can Mr. Raper forget his own dogma, blended as it is with his militant humanitarianism, nor can he quite stifle his own rage.

Is the book then a program? It is. Or rather it is two programs. One, the program of small ownership implied in the title of the book, though its practicality is doubtful in Macon County, is a program openly offered, and in line with the new tendency to apply such a remedy to regions weakened by a high percentage of tenancy. The second program, nowhere openly avowed, but continually hinted in scattered outbursts and frequent innuendoes, can hardly look toward anything else than a radical change in the Negro's social status and a resounding attack upon the South's bi-racial system, with its firmly established discriminations and segregations. What else can be implied in Mr. Raper's indignation at Negro disfranchisement, at the separateness of white and Negro in public institutions, at the workings of "white supremacy" and Negro "obsequiousness"? Mr. Raper would

remedy discrimination against Negro relief projects by seeing that the Negro is represented on county boards and school boards. He regards the spread of automobile ownership with satisfaction, for the following reasons: the Negro tenant who owns an automobile, no matter how ramshackle, learns about machinery; the car entitles him to half the road, no matter who is coming on the other half; it sets him free to roam incognito and uncommanded; it affords him an escape from "the irritations of the unequal transportation facilities provided by train and bus and plane". Such references, with the never-ending emphasis upon the inequality of Negro circumstances as compared with white, the ironical reiteration of such phrases as "the poorest folk work the the richest land", and the large display of photographs carefully selected to contrast plantation house with meanest cabin and splendid white school with most wretched Negro school — all this leaves little doubt that Mr. Raper's hopes, prayers, and designs look beyond a simple advocacy of an ownership program to lift the Negro out of mere economic debasement.

The "peasantry" to which Mr. Raper thinks the decay of the plantation system is a preface is the base for a general manoeuvre, the object of which is apparently to set the Negro up as an equal, or at least more than a subordinate member of Southern society. The second, or unavowed, program is the new form of abolitionism, again proposing to emancipate the Negro from the handicaps of race, color, and previous condition of servitude. It seizes upon small ownership for purposes of rationalization and, neglecting all else, offers it as a panacea. Once the panacea was

simply the abolition of slavery. But when the pure principle of emancipation failed to solve the problem, the right of suffrage was added. When suffrage also failed, education became the universal panacea, and after that, interracial committees. The new fashion calls for small ownership.

Let us grant that Mr. Raper's sympathy with the lot of the Negro is admirable. But an entirely admirable interest in Negro welfare, which many Southerners would share with him, leads him to extremes. If small ownership by Negroes means what Mr. Raper apparently wants it to mean, it is unattainable as long as the South remains the South, or is to be attained only at such a cost as would make Mr. Raper out to be not a sympathetic but a ruthless person.

But is small ownership for Negroes practicable, in a more modest sense, as a program aimed simply at improving the economic position of the Negro tenant? In some parts of the South, yes. But, even if we grant the competence of the Negro as owner and the willingness of the Federal government to provide long-time loans for such a purpose, there is still a reasonable doubt that the scheme could be worked out on a considerable scale in a typical plantation region of the Deep South. Aside from other obstacles, the great and insuperable obstacle is the large excess of Negro population. To establish large numbers of Negro owners on good land would result in the ultimate eviction of white owners. These would be evicted either directly, by a process of purchase and government subsidy, or indirectly, through a process of competition, like that by which the Japanese peasant infiltrated into California. The bad race relations

brought about by the coming of the Japanese peasant, who had a low standard of living, into a region of white farmers who had a high standard of living, indicate what would happen if such a competitive element ever became a part of the plantation scene. Race relations would be worse, not better. Nor would such irritating competition be eliminated by the conversion of Negro tenants into Negro owners to a degree moderate enough to establish a relative scarcity of tenant labor and so, as Mr. Raper hints, to raise the wage scale. What would then happen is shown by what happened in the South under the NRA: white owners, obliged to pay more wages, would turn to white labor. Thus another serious cause of friction would be created. It is indeed already a potential cause of friction in Macon County, where distant loan companies have imported white Alabamians from the uplands to farm lands they have taken over.

Yet Negro ownership is practicable and, in fact, already exists in regions of the South where the Negro population is a minority. Or, as Mr. Raper notes, it may well occur even in Greene and Macon counties where circumstances may be specially favorable to it, and may have good effects. But it has good effects and may occur only where Negro ownership does not imply disturbance of the time-honored economic arrangements and social conventions which have resulted from the gradual adjustment of both races to the artificial, difficult, post-Civil War situation.

What the solution of the race problem may be, who knows? Maybe there is no possibility of a solution unless the American people can some day bring themselves to define a place for the American Negro

as special as that which they have defined for the American Indian. Certainly the Negro derives no benefit from being a bone of contention, flung passively hither and thither. The Negro's acceptance (which so piques Mr. Raper) of the rôle the South has given him would seem to indicate that he prefers an inferior status, if it be real, to being a bone.

The general Southern view would be, I imagine, that any program of agrarian reform which really helps the farmer will also help the Negro tenant. Everybody knows that the tenant needs help. And everybody with sense knows that programs of agrarian reform must proceed with due regard for the special conditions of regions and localities.

Such measures cannot begin on the assumption that the plantation is a useless anachronism in Macon County, about to collapse of its own inherent rottenness. Elsewhere that assumption might apply. Even before the sixties there were regions of the South where the plantation, especially the large plantation, represented a temporary agricultural phase and often was, indeed, an economic monstrosity. From such regions the plantation has long since vanished. But in Macon County, as in regions of the same general character, the plantation has shown singular vitality. The very fact that it has survived, even through periods of terrible agricultural disability, should lead the social scientist to ask whether it may not be specially adapted to its local situation and should not, therefore, constitute a notable exception to the general and widespread necessity of remedying agricultural disability by checking tenancy and distributing ownership more widely.

In so far as Mr. Raper's book may direct attention to the need of agrarian reform and so, by that means, may improve the Negro's lot, it will accomplish good and will, as I said at the beginning, get results. But in Macon County Mr. Raper has obtusely chosen the worst possible example to sustain his own argument. The more I think of the months that I spent in the land of Eden, the more incredible it seems that Mr. Raper ever came there to illustrate his thesis, or, having been there, could continue to argue it. In the part of Macon County around Marshallville, to which Mr. Raper devotes no special attention, are some of the best farmers in America, and certainly some of the best plantations in Georgia. By contrast certain other parts of Georgia seem a waste land of ruined fields and human unhappiness. I should not have been surprised to find the Marshallville region cited as an object lesson for those who might be interested in knowing whether a plantation system could justify itself. The planters of that region, despite the old dominance of cotton and a none too happy excursion into peach-growing, have practised for years all the farming methods now so much talked about: diversification, contour-plowing, terracing, soil-building, crop rotation. They have even tried cooperative marketing and small industry. They have a good deal of the old, self-sufficient, agrarian tradition. Such methods, administered by a kindly and generous people, have made that little area, relatively speaking, an Eden. If a sociologist makes it out to be a Hell, then that sociologist had better begin to sociologize himself, for there is something wrong with him.

The Deus ex Machina in Soviet Literature

CLARENCE A. MANNING

LITERATURES can be classified in many ways. We can approach them from the standpoint of form or of content. We can analyze them from the standpoint of the characters which they represent, the philosophies which they impart, and the degree of amusement which they offer to their readers. We can think of them from their attitude toward government and toward the social classes of the state, from the standpoint of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and all these different points of view are justified. Yet in considering the whole progress and program of Soviet literature, it may be worth while to discuss that quality in which it most varies from the literature of Russia before 1917 — its attitude toward the state.

It is exactly here that the greatest difference is found between the old and the new. For practically a century, or, to be more precise, from the ending of the Romantic period about 1840, Russian literature was primarily a literature of the opposition. The growing power of the intelligentsia imposed upon all conscious and aspiring writers the duty of showing forth the defects of the old monarchy. No matter what the conditions were, the progressive classes were forced to be against them and the few outstanding authors, as Dostoyevsky, who sought to understand the old system and criticize it from a different point of view were in the obvious minority. There has

never been a great literature which was more wholly opposed to the civilization of the day than was found in Russia.

Today all that is changed. The Soviet literature, whether by conviction or by coercion, has changed its course, and it is bound in every way to approve or to justify the trend of events. For the sympathizers and the friends of the Soviet régime, this is obvious and necessary. For the critics, it by no means follows logically or morally, but for both the fact exists just as clearly as the obligation of the Greek dramatists to treat the subjects of their tragedies with due regard for the sanctity of the traditional legends. Hence arises the necessity for many Soviet authors to turn and twist their stories as they will but yet to maintain due regard for the necessary moral and instructive end that is to come at the end of their works.

Of course with many of them there is no difficulty in doing this. The characters and the background of the stories lead them logically and of necessity to the desired ending. Gladkov in *Cement* is as definitely bound to a happy ending as is the most exciting and melodramatic success story of the American of the eighties. There is no need to strain and twist the ending. We all know that that factory is to be running on the last page of the novel and we can accept any legitimate means whereby this blessed event must come about. There is no need to quarrel with such a solution, for the myth of the happy ending is no more or less artistic than is the myth of the unhappy ending which is so dear to the indicting literature and the proletarian literature of our day outside of the Soviet Union. If this were all, we would have no need

to discuss other problems, but not all the writers are able to work so harmoniously, and the goal exists for all.

A similar situation has of course always existed, even in ancient times. Aeschylus and Sophocles did not find the morals of the Greek tragic themes repugnant and they were somehow able to bring about a solution without unnecessary clatter and machinery. The critical Euripides could not do it. He tied up the story in a curious impasse and then was obliged to invoke the service of some god to carry the tale back to the condition which the audience and the priests of Dionysus demanded. Now there is no priest but there is a censorship, as well as an opportunity for recognition as a constructive force in Soviet society, of which many writers take advantage.

We have no right to blame them. If they have studied the models of the past, they realize that the heroes of a Turgenev, attractive as they were, were still useless men, superfluous men, and now there is a period of progress and of strength, when only weaklings are superfluous, when a failure is to be called a failure or a counter-revolutionist and to be severely condemned. Even a Dostoyevsky produced heroes of little objective value to society, but today everyone must be of value. All this imposes on them an added burden, but it also gives to them a way of escape, and they take it. Many of them would be horrified to be told that they were making use of an ancient and often discredited device, but necessity is the mother of invention and the value of socialist construction together with a definite and progressive moral will save many a plot as well as many a conscience. This is par-

ticularly true of the group that were called the Fellow-Travellers, the Poputchiki, who sought to cooperate without believing, but yet it is not confined to them or to their kind.

Let us glance at a few of these devices for producing a successful ending. Take Leonov's *The Thief* as an example. Critics have declared that it is in the tradition of Dostoyevsky, and indeed many of the characters are broken men and women. They seem sunk in the mire of the physical and mental slums and the author pictures a dying society. Outstanding amid this flotsam and jetsam is the thief Mitka. Yet Mitka has had a past. He was a brave soldier in the Revolution; he had been decorated for bravery and for skill. But after the death of his favorite horse he sinks lower and lower until he becomes a celebrated thief, a dangerous member of society, hostile to both new and old. Finally his nervous collapse brings on physical illness and when he rises from his bed, a better instinct drags him away from the city. He boards a train and, like a stricken beast, he makes his way towards his home in the country.

The rest — how Mitka came to the wood-cutters and was first beaten and then kindly received; how he worked in their guild and surfeited on the food which he earned with the heavy labor of tree-felling; how he toughened and went into a factory and studied (the great days of study had come into the land), and how he won again the name he had lost — all that is outside the scope of the story. He stepped into the forest, a new-born creature, and recognized his home. Tossing its mane like an untamed horse, which seeks its rider through the world, the sun rose over Russia.

Imagine a stolid and logical writer of the world drawing such a picture. A return to the farm and the forest. It almost savors of *The Old Homestead* and Denman Thompson. We may call it sentimental if we will, but it offers a promise of redemption and of service to the state little short of miraculous. Mitka had been an adornment of the Soviets. He had fallen but he must rise again. Fresh air and hard labor are all that is necessary — together with right thinking. Even the sun, heralding a new day, appears as a traditional Apollo with a new message for the world. The *deus ex machina* of Soviet strength or the healing power of Mother Nature — they are very close together and used for similar purposes.

Leonov is perhaps suspicious as a Poputchik, but we may take Malashkin, who is more closely grouped with the proletarians in his novel *The Moon on the Right Side*. This novel has received wide publicity as an example of the shocking unmorality of certain Soviet groups. It turns on the contract between the sincere young girl who comes to the capital and her honest Communist lover who stays in the country. She yearns for a broader field of activity and aims to be modern in her contacts with the flaming-youth style of Communist, the heroes and heroines of the early stories of Pilnyak, to whom the revolution means only sex with a capital S. (We may find elsewhere than in the Soviet Union hints at the superior morality of the country people to those of the city, but surely in the nineteenth century, not now). Her sweetheart comes from the country to try to save her (page Denman Thompson again) but she will not go back with him. The story apparently ends with a

pistol shot and a suicide and Tanya is apparently finished. Then comes the epilogue and we find her back again in the country with her admirer, in her right mind, working hard and steadily as in the past for the Soviet cause.

In these stories and many like them, we find that the leading character is saved. In others the villain is destroyed, although, as so often in real life, the villain is really the most attractive character in the book. This is so in Fedin's *Cities and Years*. But there is something more to it than that, for the ending, the happy ending, the ideologically correct ending is placed in the beginning, so that there can be no doubt as to the proper character of the story.

The novel opens with a short scene describing the madness and confusion of Andrey Startsev and then the defense of the convinced Communist Kurt Van describing the murder of Andrey. Kurt explains what had happened. He describes how he had always trained himself to think objectively and how he had acted resolutely on the ground of his logical conclusions. After his speech, he steps out and is soon recalled to hear the decision of acquittal. "Kurt moved his chair up to the table. He was quiet and simple, as if he had never doubted that he would hear this decision." There is the logical end of the story, the ideological ending of it for all to read and understand.

Then for the story. It is the tale of Andrey Startsev, who might have stepped out of one of the older novels of Russia. He is a liberal, an idealist, a superfluous man, for he allows his appreciation of art and life, his love for a girl and his sense of honor to seduce him into sparing a man who has saved his life

but who is now hostile to the Soviet Union. We follow Andrey, perhaps sympathetically, through the growing mass of difficulties around him. We find how he reacts to all these things — humanly but not logically as does his friend Kurt Van. At the end, we see why Kurt had to kill him in order that the idea of the story might live, for the idea is greater than the individual and with a code as stern as that of the ancient Puritan or the mediaeval fanatic, the Communist goes on his way and is sternly approved by those who agree with him.

In such a story as *Cities and Years* there is a strong and self-reliant Communist to carry the burden of the message, and even, for the sake of clarity, a combination of *deus ex machina* and of prologue repeats for us in the very beginning the final text and moral of the story. The Communist must win. He is strong and silent and simple. Sometimes he is so silent and so simple, so straightforward and guileless in his devotion to the cause, that he is easily the prey of some designing member of the intelligentsia who lays traps for him. Sometimes he is caught so easily that we might think of him as a fool and not as a man of the future, but there can be no doubt. There stands the sentence for all to read and we can be sure that in some way the villain is going to be foiled.

Even where there is no obvious Communist to serve as the hero, a text may do as well and this is the method employed in the novel of Pantaleimon Romanov, *Comrade Kislyakov*, better known under the subtitle used in the English translation, *Three Pairs of Silk Stockings*. The introduction is far shorter. It is barely two pages in length and deals with the news-

paper accounts of the investigation of a crime which is committed on the last page of the novel, and it is the press which summarizes the case and tells the readers how they are to consider it:

The general mood (expressed in the three letters which were found) reveals a deeply-hidden, terrible disease, which is eating out the "soul" of the intelligentsia, even when it works with us, and is a dread warning for it. . . . The conditions of the epoch demand that the intelligentsia, definitely, once and for all, reconsider their political positions. At the historic moment of the socialist advance and the sharpening of the class struggle one must become an active struggler for it or pass absolutely from the scene in the most literal sense of the word.

From this point of view the following sentence is unimportant: "In spite of all the efforts of the investigating authorities, the criminal side of this tragic happening remained unsolved." Why should it be solved? The well-disposed and intelligent reader who agrees with the ruling group can form his own conclusions. They are given here for him. He is to deal critically with Kislyakov, less critically than with the others, for Kislyakov has at least partially proved his trustworthiness in establishing and developing a museum to show the social progress of Russia into the Soviet Union. As a result he even winds his way into the Communist Party, although it is a real question whether he is sincere in doing this.

On the other hand his friends from the intelligentsia, even his beloved Tamara, are obviously either dominated by the situation and trying merely to secure as unobnoxious a means of livelihood as possible, or they are shamelessly trying to secure personal ad-

vantages, as in the case of Tamara, who deliberately sells herself to a movie director for three pairs of silk stockings. The novel takes place almost entirely in the description of the personal reactions of the characters, but that is not enough. There is the official statement at the beginning, which is to show how the novel is to be read.

This substitution of a slogan or a text for the actual vindication of a character is not at all uncommon. We find the same device in Voinova's *Precious Stones*, which consists largely of the memoirs of an intellectual specialist working in a Communist office. In the beginning there is again a definite statement of what is to be the outcome of the story with proper emphasis upon the defeat of the intelligentsia, and yet, if we read the story with the usual literary responses, we find that all the human and the humane qualities are to be illustrated among the intelligentsia. The Communists are the ruthless movers of society and the intelligentsia represent those qualities which had always actuated the heroes of Russian literature.

It is this complete reversal of the policy of the literature that has been one of the most surprising characteristics of Soviet literature from the very beginning. It varies in different authors but in almost every one who aims to depict the intelligentsia in a sympathetic form there must be a definite statement as to where the ultimate fate of the struggle is to rest. There can be no doubt in the mind of a person rightly acquainted with the Soviet movement where the final victory must rest, and even if it seems strained at first sight, it is necessary that we rest on our intellectual perceptions and accept this.

This invincibility of the idea is not merely to be traced in novels. It can be seen as the key even to Soviet comedy. Take, for example, Katayev's play *Squaring the Circle*. It is a satire on the difficulties of two young couples who commence housekeeping in one room and who then discover that they are improperly mated and who desire to change partners. The theme caricatures many of the discussions of various groups, but it is happily solved by the commissar Flavy who superintends the entire area and who answers all questions of policy with the one phrase, "It won't hurt the revolution." According to him, all questions can be answered in that way. Unless an action is directly counter-revolutionary he makes the same remark, issues the same orders, and in a comedy, as a real *deus ex machina*, he brings about the desired results. It is a simple method of solving complicated problems but when we remember the attitude of the government towards success, it is unanswerable. Down with all scruples and traditions which contradict the one goal.

Here it is applied to problems of family life but in the stage version of Katayev's play, *Forward, Time*, we find the same situation. The party of workers who decide to push the machines faster are ultimately justified by a telegram from the higher authorities, although there has been no indication in the play that any tests have previously been made as to the durability of the work or the machine.

Thus in every form the author is free to create an impasse in his work, for he always can have one secure and unfailing remedy, a decree from higher authority expounding the philosophy of the Soviet

state. Of course it may be regarded as a sign of weakness in some of the men that they are compelled to resort to such a device. It is not new in the history of literature but it is a necessary and frequent device when literature has so positive a goal, when it is used to support a definite moral cause. That was true of the ancient Greeks. It was true in many of the mediaeval authors who had a sincere belief in the cause or felt that they had to show one. It is true today in the Soviet Union, for no novel can really achieve success without emphasizing once and for all, in the beginning or at the end, the ultimate triumph of the ideals and realities for which the Union stands. There can be no half-hearted sentimentalizing, no subterfuge which will serve to glorify and magnify the rebel. Perhaps at times our sympathies may go out to others but we must remember that we are outsiders and that the literature is based upon success. Hero and plot and goal are one and if, by any chance, either hero or plot fall short of the goal, then the author must bring them back by force if necessary; by decree, if possible, and so the literature can maintain its record of being a positive force in the building up of the new system. We are accustomed today to glorify a literature of failure and of criticism. The Soviets have passed all that. They need and want success and the authors are giving it to them. The methods and the devices that will serve are fundamentally old — miracles and revelations, recast into modern form, are doing their work, and they will continue as long as faith remains among the censors and the leaders of Soviet literature.

The Degeneration of Socialism

A. J. PENTY

AS THE disintegration of our civilization proceeds certain things stand out clearly from their background. One of these is that Socialism has become a destructive force. It was not always so. Before the War Socialism to a great extent represented what was large and generous in modern society. The movement had a passion for social justice. It drew its recruits from among those who were outraged by the injustices and inhumanities of the present system. Before all things it was a moral revolt and it gave the world a social conscience. But this is no longer the case. Post-War Socialism is a very different thing from pre-War Socialism. It tends to become merged in Communism, and as it does that it becomes informed by a different spirit. In place of a passion for social justice we get a spirit of class warfare. This is a consequence of the Russian Revolution, following which there has come a belief in the poisonous doctrines of Marx. Thus we see there are two strains in Socialism or Socialist Communism, shall we call it. One is idealistic, cultured, humanitarian, generous, and woolly; the other cares for none of these things, is clear cut, direct, materialistic, thirsting only for revenge. And the latter, owing to the prestige of the Russian Revolution, has conquered and killed the former. Earlier, before the War, it was possible for men of good will to identify themselves with Socialism, for the Communist element was negligible; it was possible to believe that

what was good in Socialism would triumph. Unfortunately this is so no longer. We can see today only too clearly which way things are going, and men of good will can only continue to identify themselves with the movement if they are so blind as to suppose that those into whose hands the direction of policy has fallen share their idealism. Realists see they do nothing of the kind. To support Communism is to aid and abet a sordid and practical materialism, full of revenge, that cares nothing for the ideals which Socialists value; for ideas, art, or culture, except in so far as they can be used for the purposes of propaganda.

We cannot be surprised if there are many today who live only for revenge, since industrialism has left them little else to live for. It is but natural that men who are exploited, badgered, and bullied every day of their lives, and are compelled to labor at mechanical and inhuman tasks, should thirst for vengeance. That is a reason for abolishing industrialism, not for placing power in their hands. Men in their frame of mind are not to be trusted with power. For suffering from a burning sense of injustice, and deprived of the culture that gives a true social vision, they act blindly and revengefully when suddenly raised to power. They are also filled with a general hatred and love of destruction for its own sake, as is witnessed by the conduct of the Reds in the Spanish Civil War, where class hatred is combined with religious hatred. Yet instead of reproving them for their vandalism and vile atrocities, Socialists in this and other countries remain silent about them, and collect money for the furtherance of their cause. If a tithe of the crimes had been committed by the Right, what a song they would have

made of it! But terror, torture, and vandalism are, to all appearances, in perfect order when committed by the Left. In England this support went on until protests from the Roman Catholic members of the Labor Party gave Socialists pause. It is significant that the protests had to come from Catholics.

Now what is the explanation of this degeneration of the Socialist movement? Why has their humanitarianism ended in such inhumanity? There are several reasons. The first is that Socialists suffer from a total incapacity for weighing evidence, or discriminating between ideas, and are governed entirely by their emotions and abstract theory. Indeed a Socialist, in these days, might be described as a person who is prepared to swallow any poison, provided the bottle is labelled "For the good of the people", for they take everything on trust, and never examine the contents. They hear conflicting stories of what happens in Spain, as also what happens in Russia, and accept the version of the Reds because it accords with their disposition. They see society as two hostile camps. In one camp are all the reformers who support the cause of enlightenment and emancipation; in the other are the forces of darkness and oppression. In the first category they put all who have behind them a tradition of reform and rebellion — Liberals, Socialists, Communists, Anarchists; all the noble souls who never think anything through, and never see a fact until it hits them in the face; in the other they put all who disagree with them. Socialism, Collectivism, Communism satisfy them completely because they do not see below the surface. Life for them has no depths or no heights;

it is just flat. And they have no understanding of the grounds on which they stand. In consequence the social problem is, for them, just a matter of arrangement, of planning, to use current jargon. All that is required is good will; the details can be left to a competent bureaucrat or chartered accountant to work out. They cannot imagine anyone's disagreeing with them who has not an axe to grind. That, indeed, there should be people who disagree with them, because they see more clearly than they do; that these people see only too clearly that Socialist activities are subversive of civilization, inasmuch as their final result is to liberate the flood of barbarism that is never far below the surface, is an idea that has never occurred to them.

But this social blindness is unfortunately not the monopoly of superficial self-satisfied people. Sometimes men of depth are afflicted by it. An example is the Spanish philosopher Unamuno. Nobody would accuse the author of *The Tragic Sense of Life* of superficiality. Yet he has a blind spot where social dynamics are concerned. Unamuno was pre-eminent among the intellectuals who were responsible for the Revolution in Spain. Yet he failed entirely to foresee the consequences of overthrowing authority. He failed to see that Liberalism, in whose interests the monarchy was overthrown, was essentially a thing of transition, that it could never become a center of authority, and that its accession to power could only pave the way for the triumph of the Anarchists*. Only when the worst had happened — when the Government lost all control and the Anarchists had become masters in

* Before the Civil War there were in Spain 600,000 organized Anarchists, while there were only 50,000 organized Communists.

Spain, when terror, robbery, and vandalism had become the order of the day — did he awaken to the fact that the real issue was not between Monarchy and Republicanism, Capitalism and Socialism, but between civilization and barbarism; and that unless the Reds were defeated civilization would perish. The issues in Spain are clearer than in Russia; for whereas Communism is both a continuation of and a reaction against Liberalism, Anarchism carries Liberalism to its logical conclusion, as anyone acquainted with Anarchist literature is well aware. The Anarchists are logical. There is no answer to the argument by which their social theory is supported except by going behind Rousseau, and repudiating Liberalism root and branch, including the various social theories which have developed out of it.

To go behind Rousseau means repudiating the doctrine of the natural perfection of mankind, and reaffirming that of original sin. The recognition of the reality of original sin would safeguard reformers against pitching their idealism in too high a key. It is a law of psychology that an excess of idealism will be followed by a fall from grace, since man cannot for long live on a higher moral plane than the normal; and this as true of movements as of individuals. Socialists began by demanding a perfect society; that is, they began by demanding the impossible, for no society ever was or ever can be perfect so long as human nature is imperfect; it cannot be better than the human material of which it is composed. The depredations of the Reds in Spain do not leave much room for hope that the volume of sin in the world has to any extent appreciably diminished, or hope in any approach to

the natural perfection of mankind. Their conduct gives the lie to the Socialist and democratic theory that all men are by nature equal and virtuous, that it is only circumstances that make them appear different, and that all would act decently under different conditions. For when everything that is due to circumstances is abstracted, there remains a residuum of original sin, which some possess in larger measure than others, and only by keeping this in subjection can society exist at all. This is not to justify existing social arrangements, but to insist that society cannot be rebuilt upon the assumption that all men are equal and by nature perfect; but only upon a frank acceptance of the fact that they are unequal and imperfect, and are likely to remain so.

Because of the imperfection of human nature a perfect society is beyond our reach; a reasonable one is not. But to achieve it we must accept the sinful nature of man as our starting point, that is, as a permanent hypothesis, and seek to keep it in subjection. Such a society would be superior to that of today to the extent that its laws were made (as was stated in the preamble of a seventh-century code of laws) *to enable good men to live among bad*, instead of *to enable rich men to live among poor* — as laws were made when the rich had things entirely their own way, and to some extent still are. But it would not be a perfect society, for perfection is not of this earth.

Meanwhile Socialists use the impossible standards of their perfect society as grounds for attacking all traditional institutions. If men abused their positions it was not because of original sin, but because social institutions were at fault, particularly the institution

of private property, which was made to bear the sins of the world. And from denying the validity of private property, Socialists went on to deny the validity of all traditional institutions of society except bureaucracy; which, from being regarded as a necessary evil, came to be exalted as the type and exemplar of social organization. But in turning their backs upon tradition they moved into a world of unreality, where social righteousness became associated with social insanity; because in parting company with tradition they had to take their stand on theory; and theory divorced from tradition tends to become unreal; it ceases to be an explanation of reality and becomes a substitute for it.

Chestertonian democracy is a purely mystical conception, based upon the assumption that the things men have in common are more important than their differences. If this is true, then the quantitative values, about which men are agreed, are more important than the qualitative ones, about which they differ. It is a position I find it impossible to accept. In any case it has nothing to do with democracy as we know it. Democracy in practice means "majority vote" — that and that alone. Anyone who believes that the majority, by virtue of the fact that it is a majority, has a right to impose its will on the rest of the community, quite apart from whether its decisions are wise or foolish, is a democrat; anyone who repudiates this hypothesis is not. He may be overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and may sacrifice his life for the good of humanity, but he is not a democrat; he is something else. It would clear the air of a great deal

of discussion at cross purposes if we resolved to use the word in no other sense.

I remember well the first shock I had which led me to doubt democracy. I was discussing the question of democracy with a prominent Socialist speaker in the nineties — one of the type who would doubtless be a Communist were he alive today. "I will tell you," he said, "my idea of democracy. Go to the pithead; take the first twenty men who come up; they are as fit to govern England as any other twenty." It was one of those foolish remarks which have the sudden effect of illuminating a situation. Democracy could no longer impose upon me. From then onwards, it became clear to me that democracy could only in the long run mean one of two things. It either meant government by the wise, as Rousseau, the father of democracy, imagined it would, or it meant government by anybody; and there could be no doubt about the direction in which it was moving. There came to my mind the words of an Eastern proverb: "Disturb not the minds of the ignorant."

It is interesting in this connection to recall Rousseau's ideas of democracy. In *The Social Contract* he says: "It is the best and most natural order of things that the wise should govern the multitude, when we can be sure they will govern it for its advantage, and not for their own." Moreover it was because monarchical institutions gave no guarantee of such a desideratum that he took exception to them. Thus he writes:

The one essential and inevitable defect, which will render a monarchical government inferior to a republican one, is that in the latter the public voice hardly ever

raises to the highest posts any but enlightened and capable men, who fill them honorably; whereas those who succeed in monarchies are most frequently petty mischief makers, petty knaves, petty intriguers, whose petty talents, which enabled them to obtain high posts at court, only serve to show the public their ineptitude as soon as they have attained to them. The people are much less mistaken about their choice than the prince is; and a man of real merit is almost as rare in a royal ministry as a fool at the head of a republican government. Therefore, when by some fortunate chance, one of these born rulers takes the helm of affairs in a monarchy, almost wrecked by such a set of fine ministers, it is quite astonishing what resources he finds, and his accession to power forms an epoch in the country.

Reading these words in the light of a century of democracy of a kind, there seems something rather naïve about their simple faith, since the eternal, and perhaps insoluble, problem of government is that the best and wisest do not automatically come to the top, under democracy any more than under any other form of government. It is the clever rather than the wise who do, and the clever are rarely wise, nor are the wise usually clever. The fact that the clever rather than the wise come to the front under democracy is capable of many explanations. But the most obvious is that a capacity for public speaking, of popular appeal, is the one indispensable qualification for success; and it does not follow that the man who possesses this gift is wiser or more trustworthy than his fellows. Further, the more complex society becomes, the greater is the obstruction placed in the path of the wise, because the more difficult it becomes for the

wise man to make himself understood. Thus we arrive at the paradox: the greater the complexity, the greater the need of wisdom at the helm, but the less chance is there of its getting there; for complexity promotes the interests of superficial people who do not see below the surface.

In *Unforeseen Tendencies in Democracy*, Mr. E. L. Godkin shows how the decline of the ideals of American democracy coincided with the growth of large towns, and the increase of the electorate. In the early days of the American Republic, when voters were few, men of wisdom and character were personally known to the communities in which they lived, and they became public representatives because of their prominence. But with the rapid increase of immigration after the Civil War this ceased to be true. People were no longer well known to each other. A capacity for popular appeal rather than personal character became the primary qualification for public life, because only good speakers could make themselves known to the electorate. With this change there came a deterioration in the type of public representative, and the growth of the power of the political machine, corruption and jobbery, and the defeat of political idealism.

Rousseau himself was not blind to these dangers, for though at times he talks as if democracy could do no wrong, at other times he admits the dangers; his advocacy of small states and small property was not unconnected with his apprehension of the peril that lurked in large ones. Truth to tell, Rousseau qualified his position in so many ways that it is difficult finally to convict him of anything, except the general charge

that he had an over-confidence in the improvements which he assumed would automatically follow a mere change in political machinery; though even here it is possible to quote passages from his writings against such an assumption. Of course social and political machinery we must have; and there are evils that can be kept in check by the provision of suitable machinery. But no machinery, of a democratic nature, can insure that the wise will come to the top, because there is no means of insuring that the wise are known to the people.

Meanwhile the people will follow the leadership of the wise if by hook or crook they can find their way into positions of authority. But they will not put them there; which is perfectly logical, for if the theory of equality is true everybody should be on one level. Perhaps another reason why the many never promote the wise is that they cannot distinguish between a wise man and a crank, and so fight shy of both; or perhaps it is that they feel that to promote the wise is to abdicate authority, and their quota of original sin prevents them from doing that. Anyway, confronted by democracy the wise man is helpless, for he can never hope to convince the majority of the rightness of his views, if he should happen to find himself at their mercy; they are beyond them. His only chance is to be given a leg-up by someone of understanding already in authority. This explains why aristocracy in spite of its defects works better than a democracy. Probably the average intelligence of an aristocracy is no higher than that of any other class. But the individual aristocrat is in a position to act on his own

initiative, for should he lack means himself, he will be in social contact with people who can provide them; whereas the individual of democratic birth, without means, will not; and this makes all the difference so far as the prospects of the wise are concerned.

Instead of wasting their lives vainly trying to persuade the democracy to allow them to act, as the wise in a purely democratic community are compelled to do, the wise of means or aristocratic birth can get to work at once, and the rest of the community will follow them, because they are in a position to give practical proof of their superior wisdom. And the wise aristocrats will promote the interests of other wise men who have not the advantages of birth. And because of such actions the point of view of the wise will come more or less to prevail in the aristocratic class, give it its tone, and from thence it will percolate downwards, leavening the whole of society. But if there are no wise men who inherit wealth or position, there will be no wise men in authority, because the democracy will not promote them, and no one else can. And as a consequence the tone of the community will progressively decline. The theory of averages leads ever to a lower level.

All this serves to show that in their hearts the people do not believe in democracy as it is understood today; they demand authority and leadership, and left to themselves they would not, if it were honest, think of questioning it. It is exploitation to which they object and rightly object, and they only challenge authority when it is too closely associated with exploitation. The people realize that under any system, democratic or otherwise, they must obey; and that democratic insti-

tutions do not mean government by the people any more than monarchy or aristocracy, but government by a caucus who exercise authority in the name of the people. What they really want is not control over the national government, which deals with things remote, but control over the immediate circumstances of their own lives, which the mediaeval guildsmen had, and which capitalism and industrialism deny them. Viewed in this light, democracy today presents itself as an attempt to secure by external means a control over the economic arrangements of society that can only be exercised from within, as it was in the Middle Ages. By restoring regulative guilds of the mediaeval type the people will regain control over their lives. For the rest it will be government by consent, whatever form authority takes.

Most people dismiss any suggestion of returning to the Middle Ages for a model of social organization as sheer romanticism, without any relation to the problem that confronts us. But that is only because very few people take the trouble to think anything through. Those who do make the discovery that returning to fundamentals, to which the modern world must return if it is to avert catastrophe, means returning to the Middle Ages in more senses than one; because in the Middle Ages are to be found the beginnings of the modern world, as well as the spiritual wellsprings of life. To dismiss therefore any idea because it is mediaeval is to refuse to trace ideas to their source, which is just what modernists do; it explains why they are so hazy about everything. But if the people are ever to regain control over the circum-

stances of their lives, they will in some sense have to return to the Middle Ages, to take their stand again on the great traditions of the past; the pursuit of progress is a will-o'-the-wisp's leading that can only increase their misery and slavery.

On what terms can men regain control of their own lives? The first condition is that they abandon the equalitarian principle and belief in the natural perfection of mankind, not only because these are contradicted by the facts of nature, but because they stand in the way of common-sense social arrangements, setting men off on vain attempts to realize the unrealizable. They stand in the way of any redistribution of property, because as property is by its nature unequal, the demand for economic equality involves the abolition of private ownership, which in turn leads to the abolition of the private management of industry; and this results either in bureaucratic control, which denies alike liberty and equality, or in "producing guilds", which experience proves are unworkable in so far as they are faithful to the principle of equality.

The "perfect society" of Socialists is full of snags. It does not work because human nature is imperfect. Common sense suggests therefore that instead of beginning with the assumption that human nature is perfect, we begin with the assumption that it is not; and that if society is to maintain its integrity, evil must be kept in subjection, in order that good men may live among bad. To translate this idea into the terms of social organization, we must, like the mediaeval guilds, proceed upon the assumption that a high standard of commercial morality can only be maintained when

laws exist to suppress a lower one. With this end in mind we shall not seek to abolish private industry in favor of cooperative industry, but to break up large-scale industry into small units, and superimpose over each industry an organization to regulate its affairs, much in the same way that professional societies enforce a discipline among their members. But there will be this difference, that, in addition to upholding a standard of professional conduct, such regulative guilds would be concerned to promote a certain measure of economic equality, in the same way that trade unions do today. Such guilds would insist that all who engaged in any industry should conform to their regulations, which would be concerned with such things as the maintenance of fixed and just prices and wages, the regulation of machinery and apprenticeship, the upholding of a standard of quality in production, the prevention of adulteration and bad workmanship, mutual aid, and other matters appertaining to the conduct of industry and the personal welfare of its members.

Though such regulative guilds are identical in principle with the mediaeval guilds, there is yet no technical difficulty that stands in the way of their establishment over industry today; for the principles to which it is proposed to give practical application are finally nothing more than the enforcement of moral standards. Though modern industry differs from mediaeval industry, the differences are technical, and no technical difference can involve a difference of moral principles. On the contrary, what is involved is a difference of application. For whereas mediaeval guilds exercised control over employers and their assistants engaged in small workshops, owned by small

masters, our proposed modern regulative guilds would, at first, exercise control over employers and workers engaged in both large and small factories and workshops owned by private individuals, limited liability companies, and self-governing groups of workers. Later the limited liability companies would tend to disappear as a consequence of the steady pressure that could be applied, and the small man would take his place in industry again; for the enforcement of moral standards, the suppression of abuses, would cut at the root of company industry.

To make such control effective, it would be necessary to depart from the mediaeval model to this extent: that instead of authority being vested exclusively in the hands of the masters, as it was in the Middle Ages, the workers should be given representation. Perhaps the Syndicates of Fascist Italy, in which employers and workers are given equal representation with a government official to act as arbitrator, provides the best working model. It would be necessary to make this departure from the mediaeval model because the typical employer today is not a master of his craft, jealous for its honor as was the mediaeval employer, but a financier who is interested only in the profit and loss account, and therefore is not to be trusted with final authority. Hence the conclusion that if standards of honesty and fair dealing are to be upheld, prices and wages fixed at a just level, machinery and other things necessary to the proper conduct of industry regulated, the final authority must be vested in the trade as a whole, for only those who suffer from the growth of abuses can be relied upon to take measures to suppress them.

In comparison with the enforcement of such moral standards over industry, all other issues, such as whether the workers are engaged in cooperative production or producing guilds, whether they have small workshops of their own or are employed by others, are secondary. They are not matters of principle, but of expediency or personal preference. There is no greater mistake than to assume that most men prefer to work cooperatively with others. On the contrary, the majority, the vast majority, I believe, prefer, other things being equal, to be employers or employed. Numbers of men prefer to work as assistants because they don't like responsibility; while men of a masterful disposition are too individualistic by temperament to love cooperation and would be mere grit and friction inside any organization of a cooperative kind; while other men prefer to work under men of masterful dispositions, because they like to know just where they are; while other men prefer to work alone. Preferences of this kind have nothing to do with indifference to or love of money. Men may have any of these differences, and be good or bad citizens. It is entirely a matter of temperament. For this reason a mixed economy, which is flexible and contains different types of organization, is best adapted to differing human needs, and the varied circumstances of industry. What is important is that these varying types of men in any single industry — employers, employed, cooperators — should submit to the same regulations, or suffer expulsion from the guild. If moral standards were enforced over industry by regulative guilds, the particular way men preferred to work could be left for them to decide, for their differences could not

have harmful consequences; while, as I have already said, the enforcement of the guild discipline combined with taxation of larger scale industry would tend to weed out undesirable forms of industrial organization such as limited liability companies.

But all this is wasted upon Socialists. Like heretics in all ages, they believe but one thing necessary for salvation; in their case it is the abolition of private property, upon which they have a fixation. And they are so obsessed with this idea that it blinds them alike to experience and the dictates of common sense. Finally it leaves them at the mercy of cads and other disreputable elements of society; for, attributing all evils to external causes, they overlook the part played by the evil desires of men, and remove all social and political barriers, on the assumption that men are by nature perfect; to find out, when it is too late, that they have not established the perfect society, but opened the floodgates to anarchy and revenge.

REVIEWS

Troubled Americans *

IT is unlikely that when Miss Martha Gellhorn was writing *The Trouble I've Seen* she intended to shape a Distributist Tract for the Times, one that would bring up with a start of tardy conviction all those who hope to reach the social millennium by relief projects, or by the revival of trade, or by unemployment insurance, or by any other of today's panaceas for the common man's plight. It is certain that she intended something quite different, although she abjures all outspoken propaganda in her four studies in contemporary misery. But Distributist tracts do not reach us with prefaces by H. G. Wells; nor are they recommended to us with praise by the First Lady of the land.

And a preface by H. G. Wells and the recommendation of Mrs. Roosevelt are the auspices under which Miss Gellhorn's book has been issued. In less than three pages Mr. Wells is more Wellsian than ever. The recommendation of Mrs. Roosevelt must remain something of a mystery, unless, indeed, it came out of that code of sportsmanship which dictates that the loser in a public tennis-match must step smartly up to the net and shake the hand of his conqueror in brisk congratulation. For Miss Gellhorn's stories, one and all, turn on the depths of despair to which poor human creatures are reduced when their

* THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN by Martha Gellhorn (MORROW. 306 pp. \$2.50).

only chance of living is to accept the "relief" of a government relief project. They do not make comfortable reading for anyone, but it would seem that of all those who writhe when they are faced with these case-histories of hopelessness, those most enthusiastic about the steps that the present government is taking would have the hardest time of it.

Miss Gellhorn tells four stories: of an old woman and her family; of a union organizer and a fellow workman who was born to be a dupe (although the author would not hold, it is certain, that Pete was duped by Joe); of young lovers; of a child of eleven who drifts into prostitution. The sad company have one bond: they are all unfortunates who come to grips with "Relief", who have had to abandon human standards and human dignity in order to continue to live at all. Miss Gellhorn tells their stories very movingly. Again and again she shows the slow breakdown of pride, and again and again she shows decent pride resurgent the moment food and shelter are assured. And then she shows the sickening tragedy of the uprooting of the second growth, under conditions of doling, of supervision, of transplanting in accordance with new "projects", of herding and condescension.

Old Mrs. Maddison, torn from her decaying shack in the city where she "had lived a year now, which was a long time for anyone to have the same house" and moved into another shack on a farm in connection with a Rehabilitation Project ("Something about the name upset Mrs. Cahill. . . . It was such a vast sound, such a stupendous and splendid idea, and when you got right down to it, it was a chance to live in

an abandoned negro shanty or a badly made, too small, new house; without adequate water, heat or light, clothes or medical care: and work until your back broke to raise a crop for which there might or might not be buyers)—Old Mrs. Maddison dimly knew where her good lay: “She saw the house in her mind: a neat little white house with roses all over it . . . and things on shelves in jars, very good to eat, which she had made herself, and curtains at the windows.” And being wise and old, although not what Mr. Wells would mean, in his preface, by “properly educated”, she tried to keep her city-corrupted family in the cleaned and advertisement-papered house till they could learn the joy of eating their own vegetables, but the job was too much for her.

The other stories are less universal, even the story of Jim and Lou, the young lovers, who have some of Mrs. Maddison’s own courage and directness, for the reason that they reek (*pace* Mr. Wells, who “never once” found Miss Gellhorn “lapsing into sentimentality”) of that reverse sentimentality which comes of piling on more agony than a situation will bear, with the result that the reader, stunned by the constant call on his pity, ends by failing to react at all. This is not to say, heaven knows, that it is improbable that Miss Gellhorn has ever found as much misery in the heart of one human situation as she pours here into her stories, but simply that, either as artist or instigator of outright angry reaction against the ills she paints, she misses the mark she has obviously set herself by overshooting.

The last story in the book, which received the

greatest amount of attention from the press, that of Ruby, ruined in childhood, should not have gone into a book for general circulation. There is little chance that this point will be conceded in our generation, but the prostitution of a child is not material for art. That it is material for action is undeniable; which is not the same thing as to say that it should be made available to every young person who knows how to read, or presented as fiction to the indiscriminating. If Mr. Wells could not see sentimentality in this story, or in the secondary story of Clara in "Jim and Lou", then it is obvious that he does not know where to look for it, confusing, in the good old fashion of the naturalistic writer, sentimentality with the saccharine.

"Lapses into sentimentality" there are galore, and heaping up too many shocks and sorrows may draw readers by the fascination of morbid sensation, or plunge them into unchristian despair. But since there is an honest amount of courage, tenderness, selflessness, and love in the characters Miss Gellhorn draws, since she has been not only scrupulous but skillful in showing these truly human qualities flowering in the very depths of misery, *The Trouble I've Seen* seems more likely to bring out compassion in its readers than any other emotion. And compassion is a lovely virtue.

Nevertheless, it is not only for this that Miss Gellhorn's book is mentioned in these pages. There is, as has been said, no indication that she herself has arrived at seeing that no man is safe, no man is happy, who has not his land, his shop, or his protected craft. On the contrary, there are many straws in the book to point to the order of society which the author finds

more desirable than Mr. Roosevelt's projects for relief: those who can work and are willing to work should have jobs and wages and security. That the bare security which jobs and wages give—whether the jobs and wages come from private employers or from the employer-state which Miss Gellhorn undoubtedly prefers—is not sufficient, does not appear anywhere in this book. Her characters could have shown her: she might have seen how Mrs. Maddison clung to her land, how Pete's heart broke at the knowledge that he must give up his symbols of ownership, his rugs and lamps and household goods, before he could have relief. She might have watched Mr. Barr, whose good home-made furniture no one wanted any longer, keeping himself sane by making little chairs and tables in his clearing in the wood. Jobs and wages might keep Pete's scraps of property together for a while in a rented flat near his factory; but where is his house, in which he may keep them safely forever?

And yet Mr. Wells—well, Mr. Wells says this of the plight of these characters:

Yet how else could it be in a God's Providence Democracy, without proper education in its schools, without truth in its newspapers, unaccustomed to scientific advice and guidance . . . ?

"Truth in its newspapers", no. But of "proper education" in the sense Mr. Wells uses those words, of "scientific advice and guidance"—God save the mark!—this God's Providence Democracy has had God's plenty! "The greatest storm of economic change that has ever broken upon mankind", of which Mr. Wells goes on to speak, has broken upon us largely because

of "education" of Mr. Wells' variety, and of a plethora of "scientific advice and guidance". Our society has broken down from them. Let us face it while there is time, and not be persuaded by Mr. Wells and his kind that the cure for the catastrophe which is upon us lies in still more "proper education" or ever again any more of his "scientific guidance and advice". A home and a hearth will educate us as we need to be educated; love of land and a family will give us better advice than all the scientists on earth.

DOROTHEA BRANDE COLLINS

Pascal from Without*

THE works of the great writers, despite their familiarity, are never exhausted. There is always possible a new appraisal of Shakespeare and Cervantes, of Goethe and Pascal. In this book there is a new view of Blaise Pascal, the great French genius who was at once scientist, mystic, essayist, and fierce protagonist of the lost cause of Port-Royal.

In the three hundred years since his death Pascal has been studied from so many angles that the portraits we have of him are confusing. In our own time the classical portrait has been that of Victor Cousin: the romantic Pascal, the Pyrrhonian — a doubter who forces himself to believe with his heart what he cannot believe with his reason. This Pascal is a genius of despair, who has no peace because he is unable to harmonize what he knows of the infinite silences with what he sees of the exaggerations and follies of re-

* PASCAL. THE LIFE OF GENIUS by *Morris Bishop* (REYNAL & HITCHCOCK. 398 pp. \$3.50).

ligion. Others, like Boutroux, see in him an inordinate struggle between emotionalism and intellectualism. While a third class, represented by Bremond, see him as a mystic with a first conversion and a second conversion and with a long period of spiritual dryness between the two.

The author of this book sees him as "an amateur saint". He was, it seems, a scientific genius who attempted sainthood and failed in the attempt. Logic led him to the God of Jansenism, the God of geometry. His universe was a cosmos of law, where nothing is free, not even Man. As a scientist he had no place in his world-view for free will and no place for what the theologians call sufficient grace. But at a certain moment in his life he had a mystical revelation that God is a fact, and he immediately accepted the deduction that the concerns of this world are of no importance. Of his failure to leave this world, here is the explanation:

Passion is the clue. He was excessive, extreme, infuriate. The course of his life was interrupted and reoriented in crises provoked by logic but expressed in convulsions of emotion. Passion was the substance of his soul. Passion made his genius and was at war with it. In his passionate renunciation of science he sought to kill the scientist and all his genius. His genius, and his passion, did not die. Nor did his pride, his *libido excellendi*, die. He was never content to be the common thread of life's doublet, he must be the purple.

With this conclusion there is likely to be violent dissent, but the reader is carefully prepared for it by Mr. Bishop before it is set forth in the closing pages of the book. As our author depicts him, Pascal

never changes throughout all his thirty-nine years. He is ever the genius, ever the neurotic dogged by ill-health. "The story of his life is the history of his struggle to bring genius and passion into harmony."

The book, opening with a striking paragraph reminiscent of Chateaubriand's famous summary of Pascal's life, falls into thirteen sections, corresponding to thirteen aspects of the life of the great seventeenth-century thinker. Mr. Bishop sees him successively as prodigy, inventor, physicist, mathematician, man of the world, lover, mystic, penitent, polemist, philosopher, saint, and finally as a man.

There is no effort to make an explicit appraisal of him as a writer nor any attempt to assign him his rightful place as the father of modern French prose. Likewise there is no mention whatever of the part he played in nurturing the idea of progress, an idea which was popularized in France by Perrault and Fontanelle, which had notable repercussions in England in the Battle of the Books, and which came to its full expression in Italy in Giambattista Vico's *Principles of the Science Treating the Common Law of Nations*. Yet the germ of the great deistic problem of the Age of Reason is to be found in Pascal.

The high light of the book is the author's treatment of the *Lettres Provinciales*. There were eighteen complete Letters, falling into three groups which correspond to what our author calls three phases of the war in defense of the Port-Royalists. The first Letter was published on January 23, 1656, and three others followed within a month. These four Letters are simply a warming-up for those of the second phase, wherein Pascal directly attacked the moral system of

the Jesuit casuists. The second phase runs from March 20th to December 4th, 1656, and includes twelve Letters. On January 23rd and March 24th, 1657, Pascal published the seventeenth and eighteenth Letters. The unfinished nineteenth *provinciale* was found among Pascal's papers.

In putting his hand to this polemical work, Pascal the eminent scientist became Pascal the writer. Mr. Bishop makes something of this fact, but in the opinion of this reviewer he does not make half enough. He might have expanded his statement that this new "prose style, novel in its strong simplicity, determined the shape and character of the French literary language". Other problems command the author's attention, chief among them being the charge made against Pascal that he had not merely misinterpreted, but actually misquoted, the Jesuit authorities whose casuistry he pilloried so mercilessly. Our author meets that charge with an assertion that is open to question. "The Jesuits have had to admit that ninety percent of his quotations are correct. And in the case of the ten percent, modern investigators grant Pascal's contention that he never consciously falsified or altered the meaning of a passage." In a *Studies* article written some sixteen years ago and reprinted as a pamphlet, Hilaire Belloc makes a very different evaluation of the charge. As the English critic sums it up in his recent book *Characters of the Reformation*, "Pascal caricatures and he caricatures in ignorance".

But our author does not completely absolve Pascal. He tells us that "he selected and omitted, and his selections and omissions put Jesuit doctrine in a bale-

ful light which falsifies its spirit". As to Pascal's motivation in this unfair procedure Mr. Bishop is ready with his answer:

Pascal's mind, after all its spiritual training, was filled with hatred. The Jesuits looked on the practical side of things, and Pascal hated the practical side, seeing everything under the aspect of eternity. They proposed, he said, to substitute a code of behavior for the love of God. And Pascal hated all such compounding with evil, for the emotional relation with God was his own experience, what he knew to be essential to religion.

This answer, far from solving the psychological problem, seems only to intensify it and make it more compelling. Why may it be said that Pascal's mind was filled with hatred? To reply to that it is necessary for the reader of this book to keep before him a fact which its author appears to recall only from time to time, namely that Blaise Pascal was always a sick man. As Pater points out in his essay on Pascal, great genius serves itself by the accidental conditions about it, however unpromising they be. Far from being healthy, all through his life Pascal suffered from intolerable languor, alternated by long periods of actual pain. Into his outlook on the tragedy of the human soul there passed not merely the temperament of an individual but that individual's malady also. In the *Pensées* one may find the warped opinion that "sickness is the natural state of Christians". It thus becomes at least tenable that, in any evaluation of Pascal's world-view, the critic must keep in mind that he is dealing not merely with a sensitive genius but with a man who never had a healthy day in all his thirty-nine years. Mr. Bishop tells us about this pro-

longed invalidism, but he seems to fail to see that it is an important element in the constitution of the man Pascal.

Pascalians will feel that Mr. Bishop has been less than just in his analysis of the famous *Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello* which Pascal wrote in his notes when his *Lettre d'un avocat* was condemned. This is his interpretation of the prayer: "This is the heresy of the genius, of the heresiarch, who condemns King and Pope and all mankind." As a matter of criticism the prayer need not imply heresy at all. Ernest Jovy has shown that it is used in a letter of St. Bernard to his nephew. It was in constant use among the Port-Royalists, Arnauld had used it in one of his writings in 1651, and in 1659, three years before Pascal's death, the same Arnauld had employed it in a private letter to his brother, the Bishop of Angers. Pascal, it is evident from this book, never considered himself as other than a son of the Church.

But these are minor flaws in a book that is full of excellent things. Pascal as scientist, as inventor, as mathematician is adequately sketched. The most important Pascal, the "amateur saint", is blurred somewhat. The adjective Mr. Bishop uses here shows a strange lack of insight. In nothing did Pascal show any of the half-heartedness of the dilettante. He was a born fighter, combative and passionate, as our author says. But his meditative intelligence, in the tradition of the philosopher, always sought the golden mean. It was his great tragedy that, in the too brief span of a disabled and suffering life, he never quite solved the riddle of the greatness and the misery of man.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

Regional Retrospection*

WE OF New England have looked with some envy upon the alert movement in progress among our brethren of Nashville and its circumjacent South. Long ago, *The Fugitive* took shelter with us; and the group whose wares it modestly purveyed seemed to us then, as still it does, the most important "group" in our poetic present. When these ironists and "meta-physicals" proved political economists also, as all good artists ought, we rejoiced that the "War between the States" had not disappeared — to the furtherance of our national monotony, but had, salutarily, been transmuted from bullets to tracts.

Our own "region" had, under the style of "local color", a brief, mild, minor triumph in the short tales of Mary E. Wilkins, Alice Brown, and Sarah Orne Jewett, which portrayed the Yankee stock as petering out into spinsters and neurotics, delineated the shabby gentility of village ladies and the sapping solitude of back-road farmers. A sense of decay pervaded these tales as it did, for the most part, the poetry of Frost, Robinson, and Amy Lowell. Drained of its young men by successive migrations to the West and the cities, the country resigned itself to summer tourists. The industrial centers expanded, but their Yankee residents dwindled. Intellectually, Boston became a defunct capital, a thriving center for colleges, schools, libraries, historic "shrines", and cemeteries, a negli-

* THE FLOWERING OF NEW ENGLAND by Van Wyck Brooks (DUTTON. 550 pp. \$4.00). THEODORE PARKER by Henry Steele Commager (LITTLE, BROWN. 339 pp. \$3.00).

gible factor in the imaginative and speculative life of America.

After the Civil War, New England gradually ceased to count. Her "Golden Day" or "Indian Summer" came between 1815 and 1865, when the authors of Concord, Cambridge, and Boston attained their maturity and achieved their best work. Mr. Brooks, whose knowledge of our past puts to shame most of the academic specialists, has lovingly resurrected this age and its long roster of participants. "Resurrected" is not quite the word, since it implies an *ab extra* resurrector, whereas — for better and worse — Brooks imagines himself into the age and the setting, sympathizes in turn with almost all of his elected contemporaries, is warmed, vicariously, by the optimism with which they set about creating a national culture.

The method is an extension of that practised in the author's *James*, *Twain*, and *Emerson*. Brooks has endeavored so thoroughly to integrate text and interpretation that, without the signal of quotation marks, the reader shall pass from Thoreau's phrase, say, to his commentator's, unconscious of the transition. One can comprehend Brooks's distaste for the academic quilt of auctorial shreds and editorial patches, for pages scarred with "quotes" and margins filled with documentation; one perfectly credits his introductory claim that he can quote a trustworthy "source" for every phrase that appears in the book. Still, the gain in smoothness of intersticing seems too slight to compensate for the uncertainty with which the reader is infected. Which are, which are not, the *ipsissima verba*?

The Flowering of New England, like its immediate

predecessor, *The Life of Emerson*, discards the critical method. The "world" has shrunk to the convenient confines of a region. Emerson, whose limitations Brooks once saw, has become an immaculate figure. Of the New Englanders, the "Concord Church" still top the hierarchy; and rhapsodic chapters of poetic prose celebrate the streams of consciousness flowing within the heads of Emerson and Thoreau. But the professors of Cambridge, the snobs and wits of Boston, the historians, and the merchant princes all prove capable of eliciting a warm glow. For the most part, Brooks seems to have relinquished all standards, literary, ethical, economic: a few hints suggest that he remains hostile to the New Humanists and himself vaguely socialist; yet he can admire George Ticknor and Dr. Holmes. Lowell is the only figure refused a place in the sun, the only author summoned before the World Court. What Brooks has to say of Lowell's limitations as poet, as critic, and as man is sound and penetrating, though not in essence novel: much the same view had been taken by Barrett Wendell, whose *Literary History of America*, derided and neglected, is none the less one of the few histories of our letters written from a self-consistent attitude and with a more than national scale of reference. The injustice lies in this: that Brooks, who, for the most part, has said for the New Englanders what can be said for them by their well-wishers, applies, to Lowell alone, those "counsels of perfection" which, to be sure, find him wanting, but would, in very considerable measure, diminish the stature of the others.

The least satisfactory chapters celebrate Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne. In these idylls, the heroes'

convictions have dissolved into sensibility, their Puritan bones, sinews, and muscles into a fragrant but somewhat sickish attar. Forgetful of Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, Brooks suggests no measuring — and diminishing — perspective.

Excellent (and, probably, for many readers, the freshest) are the two chapters on the Boston historians — Sparks, Bancroft, Motley, and Prescott. For Prescott, Brooks displays obvious affection; and I should hazard a guess that it was the belated and enthusiastic reading of Prescott which gave Brooks the notion of doing for New England's Golden Day what one of her historians had done for a glamorous age of Spain.

At the devising of panorama, Brooks displays an unexpected and sensitive brilliance. He has read innumerable minor poets like Hillhouse and Percival, minor novelists like William Ware and Sylvester Judd, travel books like Caleb Cushings's *Reminiscences of Spain*, official memoirs and garrulous autobiographies; and he shows fine skill in the selection of the occasional insight or revealing phrase or piquant detail and fine discernment of its social or artistic import. Without magnifying their relative stature, he has grasped, and indicated, the representative significance of minor persons. It would be difficult to improve upon his sketches of Noah Webster, Nathaniel Bowditch, George Bradford, Elihu Burritt, Alexander Everett, or to put more appealingly the claims of such neglected worthies as James Jarves, the collector and proponent of Italian primitives, Washington Allston, the poet-painter dear to Coleridge, Horatio Greenough, prophetic advocate of a functional art, and E. T. Channing, the Harvard professor

of rhetoric whose pupils composed, in so large measure, the writers of New England's Renaissance. Brooks's combination of first-hand acquaintance and independent judgement removes these chapters from competition with the text-book *And Others*. The successes of the book are such group portraits as "The Boston of Gilbert Stuart", "Harvard College in 1815", "West of Boston", and "Romantic Exiles".

A model for subsequent compositors is the fashion in which, within these panoramic chapters, Brooks handles his modulations and interludes. Without the least hint of sermonic points or mechanical structure, he moves from theme to theme by placing in juxtaposition the moments of contact his subjects offer. This style, however, is too persistently lyrical for the reader's comfort: read in sequence, it cloy; one craves an occasional tartness or dissonance. The trite metaphor of the title, at once too faded and too pretty, indicates, not too unfairly, the weakness of the book: it offers the spring lilacs without the mud, the gullies, and the boulders.

Though Theodore Parker died in 1860 and hence belongs exclusively to the age of "the Flowering", Brooks omits more than passing mention of this energetic clergyman. The reason one can conjecture: Parker's claims were quantitative, in consequence of which he made much stir in his day, but he offers little sustenance to such discriminating spirits as, eager that the world shall lose no real, if slight, excellence, search yesterday's scriptures.

Parker was a scholar, accustomed to study for ten or twelve hours a day, and possessed of perhaps the largest private library in Boston. He was a reformer,

the gamut of whose endeavors included temperance, the amelioration of prisons, the rights of labor, and, chiefly, the abolition of bond slavery. He was a theological radical who shocked the "Channing Unitarians" by his negations of the supernatural and his proclamation of an "Absolute Religion" superseding traditional Christianity, and who was, for orthodox Evangelicals, so eminently the infidel of the day that they set up Dr. Joseph Cook's fiery Monday lectures to refute Parker's Sunday utterances. He was a preacher who gathered together, in old Music Hall, weekly audiences of three thousand, and a popular lecturer throughout the North, and an incessant correspondent. Born a farmer's son, without the aid of a Harvard education, he almost became what, with a dash of egotistic exaggeration, he called himself: the most hated man in America. His friend, J. S. Dwight, characterized his life as "a succession of convulsive efforts". But he completed none of his projected scholarly monuments; he wrote too hastily and too verbosely; as a thinker, he was unoriginal. Little, save the record of the convulsions, remains.

Commager's recent biography of Parker, based on careful and extensive scholarship, is a very readable performance but scarcely succeeds in making of the "Yankee Crusader" a figure of more than museum dimensions. In a too posed preface, the biographer asserts that he has written because he could not help himself and for his own satisfaction, and that he is concerned with Parker's interests, not his own reactions to those interests. But he is unable to sustain any consistent attitude, either the dry objectivity of the historian or the application of critical principles.

He treats Parker as though the man were important, but seems not to know why. Now he admires him, now he patronizes him, alternately attracted and repelled by the egotism, the energy, and the optimism of the man. Whole-hearted satire, or sentimental adulation, or arid impartiality might have handled Parker with artistic unity and effect; in wobbling between all three, for want of making up his mind, Commager has written a competent and graceful failure.

What is chiefly lacking in both books is any passionate concern with ideas, such concern as belonged to the more virile New England and to Parker himself. A certain futility necessarily pervades chronicles written by men who are more than fact-arrangers but less than philosophic historians.

AUSTIN WARREN

The Modern Disease*

THIS earnest, wide-ranging, and somewhat overlong book comes to the reader under a peculiar combination of auspices. It is published by a house which — always admirably adventurous in undertaking serious non-fiction which shows little commercial promise — has nevertheless become associated with works of a generally leftist and collectivist nature. Yet this book has been widely praised in the Catholic press, and appears this month on the Cardinal's White List of recommended reading. A reviewer therefore approaches it with some natural curiosity.

* IN THE SHADOW OF TOMORROW by J. Huizinga
(NORTON. 240 pp. \$2.50).

What he finds is an essay on the modern cultural crisis, for the most part sound and penetrating in its diagnosis and hopeful if not very specific in its prescription for a cure: an essay written by a Professor in a Dutch University who is evidently widely read in all modern historians of culture, who has been taken in by neither Marx nor Spengler nor Freud, and whose only conspicuous prejudice seems to arise from an insufficient consideration of the very various and conflicting elements in the modern Fascist movements. Whether he is a Catholic does not become evident, though he quotes readily from the *Osservatore Romano*; that he is a Christian seems clear.

Dr. Huizinga's explanation of the modern crisis (his opening sentence is "We are living in a demented world") is in essence a simple one. It is that the Romantic movement (as expressed in philosophy, the social sciences, and the arts), given ever-increasing force by technological advance in the realm of communication, has brought us to a dead-end of almost complete anti-intellectualism and anti-rationalism, with a consequent abolition of moral values which no civilization can withstand. In his view, the only way out is a deliberate reversal of emphasis, a retrieval of ethical and metaphysical values.

In the course of his diagnosis — often brilliantly in his thinking, not always so brilliantly in the translated phrase — he touches upon nearly every social and political phenomenon of modern times. He deplores the fact that the modern mind "sees the action of the human will as a factor of only limited significance", the conception of "the irreversibility of the social process [which] has found its formal expression in

the word Evolution". He insists that "domination of human nature can only mean the domination of every man by himself". He points out the fundamental danger of "a weakening of the power of judgement", brought on by too much knowledge spread too thin, by the increasingly passive attitude toward entertainment, by the growth of pictorial suggestion in films and in advertising. He sees a "decline of the critical spirit", a "diminishing regard for truth", brought about by the increasing prostitution of science to technology and to such political concepts as racial superiority. (While he condemns the notion of Nordic superiority as ridiculous self-exaltation, he does not ignore the problem created by the existence of two antipathetic races in the same nation.) To Freudianism he assigns a part of the blame for the lowering of critical standards. He sees also a general "perversion of the functions of science", which is no longer "guided by a higher abstract principle". And in all these things he finds the disavowal of Reason, the glorification of the subrational, the worship of life as such, of being at the expense of knowing, the hopeless confusion of the spheres of knowledge and will, which in his view are the typical symptoms of the modern crisis.

His argument against totalitarianism — which he defines as the placing of the state outside and above all ethical compulsion, and which he considers a major danger to civilization — is vehement and recurs throughout the book. In brief, it is that the doctrine of the moral autonomy of the state goes for any state and any group within the state, and must result either in anarchy or in the gradual creation of a single state

by conquest. He seems, however, to be reaching toward a proper distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarian dictatorship, admitting that "our time is in need of heroic treatment, provided it is administered by the proper physician and in the proper manner", and recognizing in "the political revivalisms of our day . . . something of the spiritual attitude necessary for the restoration of culture", though it is "impure, wrapped in excessive puerilism, sullied by falsehood and deception". There is a chapter on Puerilism which makes some stimulating points. ("The most fundamental character of true play . . . is that at a certain moment it is *over*. . . . Nowadays play in many cases never ends. . . . The phenomenon shows itself . . . in a semi-serious attitude toward work, duty, fate, life . . . characteristic of over-refined civilizations.") There are chapters on art, literature, and style which bring forward supporting evidence for the change of increasing irrationality. And there is finally a chapter against war which is the weakest in the book. Here Professor Huizinga rests his charges on the ground that with the increasing destructiveness of modern warfare, the objectives attained are no longer worth the tremendous cost in national resources and vitality, and that hence those who accept war are today so anti-rational as to deserve to be called superstitious. He makes no allowance for the fact that no one pretends that war has never been wholly reasonable; nor that even irrational war might be preferable to the spread and permanent domination of such an anti-cultural principle as the totalitarianism which he hates.

It is when he comes to his prognosis of the future

that Professor Huizinga's book becomes disappointing. He definitely rejects, to be sure, such false hope as is raised by the proponents of the "new education" or of "economic planning"; he rejects equally Spengler's pessimistic analysis. "It is possible that in the great body of mankind the healthy flow of life nevertheless continues more powerfully than it would seem. The disease may work itself out. . . . Unperturbed by folly and violence a vast number of men of good will live quietly on. . . . All over the world a community is spread ready to accept the new, if it proves good, without abandoning all that is old and tested. . . . They are not held together by banners and slogans, their fellowship is one of the spirit." Whence will the new impulse come? Professor Huizinga argues that it must result from "an internal regeneration of the individual . . . human action governed by a principle of absolute good and evil . . . spiritual clarification". But what will bring it about, other than an ultimate revulsion when humanity has passed to low enough depths, he does not say; and he seems specifically to exclude the Church as a prime mover in the process.

Here then is an essay on the modern crisis in the tradition of Ortega's *Revolt of the Masses*, Benda's *Treason of the Intellectuals*, and Berdyaev's *End of Our Time*. It is sounder in its diagnosis than Ortega, both sounder and more realistic than Benda, and without the Oriental pessimism of Berdyaev. But it still leaves something to be desired, both in its weighing of the valuable elements in the Fascist movements — they may be considered, from a proper viewpoint, as the strongest evidence of a modern revulsion to-

ward the "eternal truths, above the stream of evolution and change" which Professor Huizinga wishes to recapture; and in vagueness as to the source of the "spiritual regeneration" required. The world indeed still contains many "men of good will"; but what we need to know is how to make that number grow before it is too late.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, of THE AMERICAN REVIEW, published 10 times a year at Camden, New Jersey, for October 1, 1936. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a notary public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Marvin McCord Lowes, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of THE AMERICAN REVIEW, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Seward Collins, 231 West 58th Street, New York City; Editor, Seward Collins, 231 West 58th Street, New York City; Managing Editor, None. Business Manager, Marvin McCord Lowes, 231 West 58th Street, New York City.

2. That the owner is: Bookman Publishing Company, Incorporated, 231 West 58th Street, New York City; Seward Collins, 231 West 58th Street, New York City.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 2 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

(Signed) MARVIN MCCORD LOWES,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 13th day of October, 1936.

ALFRED DEALLENBACH.

Notary Public.

[SEAL]

(My commission expires March 30, 1938.)